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Columbia University

*STUDIES IN COMPARATIVE LITERATURE*

IRISH LIFE IN IRISH FICTION

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# IRISH LIFE IN IRISH FICTION

BY

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## PREFACE

No attempt has, I believe, been made before to bring into a single survey the Irish novelists of the first half of the nineteenth century and their work. This book aims to give — between a few introductory remarks upon Irish society and a literary estimate — a sketch of the vista of Irish life opened by the novelists, and, in doing this, to consider their novels most carefully where they seem, in one way or another, representative of national life and character. The value of the fiction of the period before the great famine is on the whole historical in the larger sense; not artistic. It takes on significance chiefly as a remaking of Irish life, which, by virtue of such artistic qualities as it possesses, does what history proper can hardly do, — creates the illusion of the life of the past. In the novels may be seen just how the racial antipathies, the religious antagonisms, the sleepless consciousness of past wrongs, and, in short, all the discords that broke harshly upon the everyday intercourse of man and man, found expression.

I am glad of this opportunity of thanking Mr. William Butler Yeats for the criticisms which he has contributed to the magazines or prefixed to the anthologies he has edited. They have been directly helpful to me because of their unfailing sympathy, their knowledge, and their correct perspective, which I have not found combined in the criticism of a slightly earlier day upon the same or kindred subjects. I wish also to thank my friend, Mr. Lewis Nathaniel Chase, for his kind help. Finally, I must express my indebtedness to Professor George Edward Woodberry for the stimulus of his instruction in the years of undergraduate and graduate work, and in particular for the criticism and suggestion that have been invaluable to me in writing this book.

The bibliography at the end of this volume may be useful to any who wish to acquaint themselves with the Irish fiction of the period here considered. Some authors and a number of novels that did not seem to call for attention in the text are included in the bibliography, together with a list of biographical and other works that have been found especially helpful.

H. S. K.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY,  
September, 1903.

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# IRISH LIFE IN IRISH FICTION

## CHAPTER I

### IRISH SOCIETY

IRISH society as it was between the independence of the Irish Parliament and the Union, 1782-1800 — the heart of the period in which the Irish novelists of the first half of the nineteenth century like best to lay the scenes of their stories—was everywhere stamped with the impress of historical events and political conditions that produced distinctive social types and a most curious set of manners. The nation was divided into two great classes, one chiefly a Protestant nobility and gentry professing the religion of the Established Church, the other chiefly a Catholic peasantry. Among the nobility and gentry there was a scattering of Catholic families. Though the great body of

the peasantry was Catholic, there was in the North of Ireland a large population of Protestant, mainly Presbyterian, peasants. The middle class was small and unimportant.

The Protestant nobility and gentry were the monopolists of every kind of power and privilege and the possessors of most of the wealth of the country. Many of them, the descendants of the English conquerors, still looked upon themselves as mere settlers, and disclaimed the name of Irishman. They were not Irish in spirit, and prided themselves upon their English extraction. Growing up under the conditions of Ascendancy, they of course bore the marks of it upon them. They were unique both in the combination of qualities included in their make-up and in the degree to which certain of these qualities were developed. They had the frankness and high spirit of an aristocracy, but lacked the sense of responsibility that generally goes with power. From his earliest appearance in history the Celtic Irishman was preëminently hospitable and convivial; and the Saxons caught these contagious qualities as soon as they set foot upon Irish soil, and practised them to a fault. These gentry, as was natural to

men in whose favor the laws were made and against whom they were scarcely operative, were a lawless class, overbearing, unused to contradiction in their domains at home and impatient of it abroad. Many of them, new to the duties and responsibilities of landed proprietors, which were most trying in Ireland even to the patient and experienced, came by royal grant suddenly to great estates. Sudden accession to great possessions could not fail to stimulate and give play to all the tendencies to recklessness and extravagance so marked in the Irish upper classes. As masters, though often indulgent, they were autocratic, irresponsible, reckless, and violent, ruling their estates literally as despots, binding and loosing as they chose. Eminent examples of the type just described were not wanting. A personal acquaintance with a distinguished member of the class — Mr. Beauchamp Bagenal, of Dunleckny, County Carlow — will be more to the purpose than an enumeration of the traits of the gentry. Mr. Bagenal is described with comic gusto in the pages of Froude, and in Mr. Daunt's *Eighty-five Years of Irish History*. Mr. Daunt will present him : —

“Of manners elegant, fascinating, polished by extensive intercourse with the great world, of princely income, and of boundless hospitality, Mr. Bagenal possessed all the qualities and attributes calculated to procure him popularity with every class. A terrestrial paradise was Dunleckny for all lovers of good wine, good horses, good dogs, and good society. His stud was magnificent, and he had a large number of capital hunters at the service of visitors who were not provided with steeds of their own. He derived great delight from encouraging the young men who frequented his house to hunt, drink, and solve points of honor at twelve paces.

“Enthroned at Dunleckny, he gathered around him a host of spirits congenial to his own. He had a tender affection for pistols, a brace of which implements, loaded, were often placed before him on the dinner table. After dinner the claret was produced in an unbroached cask; Bagenal’s practice was to broach the cask with a bullet from one of his pistols, whilst he kept the other pistol *in terrorem* for any of the *con-vives* who should fail in doing ample justice to the wine.

“Nothing could be more impressive than the bland, fatherly, affectionate air with which the old gentleman used to impart to his junior guests the results of his own experience, and the moral lessons which should regulate their conduct through life.

“‘In truth, my young friends, it behooves a

youth entering the world to make a character for himself. Respect will only be accorded to character. A young man must show his proofs. I am not a quarrelsome person — I never was — I hate your mere duellist ; but experience of the world tells me there are knotty points of which the only solution is the saw handle. Rest upon your pistols, my boys ! Occasions will arise in which the use of them is absolutely indispensable to character. A man, I repeat, must show his proofs—in this world courage will never be taken upon trust. I protest to Heaven, my dear young friends, I am advising you exactly as I should advise my own son.’

“And having thus discharged his conscience, he would look blandly around with the most patriarchal air imaginable.

“His practice accorded with his precept. Some pigs, the property of a gentleman who had recently settled near Dunleckny, strayed into an enclosure of *King* Bagenal’s, and rooted up a flower knot. The incensed monarch ordered that the porcine trespassers should be shorn of their ears and tails ; and he transmitted the severed appendages to the owner of the swine with an intimation that he, too, deserved to have his ears docked ; and that only he had not got a tail, he (*King* Bagenal) would sever the caudal member from his dorsal extremity. ‘Now,’ quoth Bagenal, ‘if he’s a gentleman, he must burn powder after such a message as that.’

“Nor was he disappointed. A challenge

was given by the owner of the pigs. Bagenal accepted it with alacrity, only stipulating that as he was old and feeble, being then in his seventy-ninth year, he should fight sitting in his arm-chair; and that as his infirmities prevented early rising, the meeting should take place in the afternoon. 'Time was,' said the old man, with a sigh, 'that I would have risen before daylight to fight at sunrise, but we cannot do these things at seventy-eight. Well, Heaven's will be done.'

"They fought at twelve paces. Bagenal wounded his antagonist severely; the arm of the chair in which he sat was shattered, but he remained unhurt; and he ended the day with a glorious carouse, tapping the claret, we may presume, as usual, by firing a pistol at the cask.

"The traditions of Dunleckny allege that when Bagenal, in the course of his tour through Europe, visited the petty court of Mecklenburg Strelitz, the Grand Duke, charmed with his magnificence and the reputation of his wealth, made him an offer of the hand of the fair Charlotte, who, being politely rejected by King Bagenal, was afterwards accepted by King George III."<sup>1</sup>

The great factor in shaping the gentlemen of the type described was the code of penal laws against the Catholics which began under King William and assumed its worst features under Queen Anne. At the end of the seventeenth century the struggle between the Protestants

<sup>1</sup> Daunt's *Eighty-five Years of Irish History*, pp. 5-7.



and the Catholics for the control of the country ended in a victory for the Protestants. After the victory the Parliament and the power of the country were in Protestant hands. The penal code passed by the Parliament aimed to root the old Irish from the soil, to disinherit them and transfer the ownership of the land from the Irish Catholics to the Protestants, and further to stamp out the Roman Catholic faith in Ireland, if possible, or in any case to rob it of even a shadow of political importance. The scope of this code, its petty tyranny, and how it galled the Catholics whom it was intended to degrade, will become clear from a brief summary of its main provisions :—

“Under these laws Catholics could not sit in the Irish Parliament or vote members to it. They were excluded from the army, and navy, the magistracy, and the bar, the bench, the grand juries, and the vestries. They could not be sheriffs, or soldiers, game-keepers, or constables. They were forbidden to own any arms, and any two justices or sheriffs might at any time issue a search warrant for arms. The discovery of any kind of weapons rendered their Catholic owner liable to fines, imprisonment, whipping, or the pillory. They could not own a horse worth more than five pounds, and any

Protestant tendering that sum could compel his Catholic neighbor to sell his steed. No education whatever was allowed to Catholics. A Catholic could not go to the university; he might not be the guardian of a child; he might not keep a school, or send his children to be educated abroad, or teach himself. No Catholic might buy land, or inherit or receive it as a gift from Protestants, or hold life annuities, or lease it for more than thirty-one years, or any lease on such terms as that the profits of the land exceeded one-third the value of the land. If a Catholic purchased an estate, the first Protestant who informed against him became its proprietor. The eldest son of a Catholic, upon apostatizing, became heir at law to the whole estate of his father, and reduced his father to the position of a mere life tenant. A wife who apostatized was immediately freed from her husband's control, and assigned a certain portion of her husband's property. Any child, however young, who professed to be a Protestant, was at once taken from his father's care, and a certain proportion of his father's property assigned to him. In fact, the Catholics were excluded, in their own country, from every profession, from every Government office from the highest to the lowest, and from almost every duty or privilege of a citizen."<sup>1</sup>

These penal laws, which favored the gay, reckless, sporting Protestant gentry, brought

<sup>1</sup> Justin McCarthy's *Outline of Irish History*, p. 51.



the Catholic gentlemen face to face with almost intolerable conditions. The flower of them left a country where a spirit of selfish monopoly ruled, to seek their fortunes in other lands. To those of them who remained in Ireland two courses were open, — to turn Protestant and step at once into the privileged class, or to acquiesce in the humiliating and unmanning conditions imposed by the code. Many of the Catholic gentlemen chose the former course and conformed to the Established Church. Those who chose the other alternative, and held fast to the old faith, often sank down through enforced apathy and ignorance to a condition not far above the peasantry about them.

The Catholic gentry suffered grievously from the code, but it was the peasantry most especially who bore its brand. Their ignorance, their lawlessness, their fervent devotion to their faith, were in large measure due to it.

The social life of Ireland centred in Dublin, and the social life of the smaller towns was cut as closely as possible after the same pattern. The years from 1782 to the end of the century were the palmy days of the Ireland of the Ascendancy, the days of drink and debt, improvidence

and extravagance. The Irish capital was tumultuous. Street brawls growing out of religious feuds were of frequent occurrence, some, by the number of combatants and their systematic conduct, more like pitched battles. In 1790 one of these conflicts occurred in which above a thousand men were engaged, a society of Protestant weavers and tailors pitting themselves against a band of Catholic butchers who advanced under a banner inscribed "V. B. Mary."<sup>1</sup> The watchmen of the city gave up all hope of controlling the disturbance, and retired to a point of vantage, well out of reach of stick and stone, to enjoy the spectacle. The disturbance was formally reported to the Mayor, but he declined to interfere, on the ground that "it was as much as his life was worth to go among them." A curious fact in connection with these rows was the participation in them of the young aristocrats — the bucks and beaux of Dublin, and the students of Trinity College, who could have no other motive than a liking for the sport on its own account. The Trinity boys, with their strong *esprit de corps*, were

<sup>1</sup> [J. E. Walsh's] *Ireland Sixty Years Ago*, Chap. I, contains an account of these street fights.

always a valuable acquisition to a faction, and with the great keys of their rooms slung in the tails of their gowns did splendid execution. A number of clubs, resembling the London Mohocks, contributed to the disorders of the city. Wild young fellows, often of the better sort, made up the membership. Notable among these were the Hell-Fire Club (perhaps the most notorious of all), the Hawkabites, Cherokees, Sweaters, Pinkindindies, and Chalkers. Each had its peculiar excuse for existing, and all had in common the purpose "to be sociable together," and, after dining, to pour tumultuously into the midnight streets, "flown with insolence and wine," and bent upon breaking the King's peace in one way or another. The specialty of the Sweaters was midnight raids upon the homes of Catholics on the pretext of searching for arms. The search for arms was the pretext; the real motive the pleasure of terrorizing the household. The Chalkers and Pinkindindies made a specialty, as an act passed against the former in 1773 recites, of "mangling others, merely with the wanton and wicked intent to disable and disfigure them." Their operations were by way of rebuke to dunning or procrasti-

nating tradesmen and the like, or to a barber, perhaps, who disappointed one of the members when his services were the condition of attendance at a dinner or ball. The Pinkindies were ingeniously humane. Shrinking from inflicting upon their victims the slightest serious injury, they cut off the tips of the scabbards of their swords, and were thus enabled to prick them full of holes without fear of going beyond the bounds of a good practical joke.

The Dublin society of rank and fashion, the most brilliant that Ireland had to offer, was in full bloom just after the Irish Parliament regained its freedom. The removal at this time of commercial restrictions gave an impulse to prosperity, and better times seemed to be dawning. The Parliament met yearly, and for each season the members took up their abode in Dublin, composing a leading class. Two hundred and fifty of the peerage and three hundred of the House of Commons, with their families and connections, annually poured into town from their country seats. Among the peerage there was much wealth, taste, and cultivation, and the polish and elegance that travel and a wide intercourse with society in England

and on the continent produced. A large proportion of the House of Commons were the true old gentry of the land, of the most hearty and festive type, overflowing with family pride, sociability, and a hospitality whose manifestations prudence was never permitted to check. In the wake of the gentry came many of the country class, with all their provincial and personal oddities and eccentricities, to give society a touch of distinctly local color.

The eighteenth century was everywhere a century of violence and hard drinking. In Dublin the violence found an outlet in disturbances like those alluded to above, in which the lower classes and some wild fellows of the better sort participated. But for the nobility and gentry duelling was the mania, and it was indulged in to an extent almost beyond belief. Sir Jonah Barrington in his *Personal Sketches* vouches for two hundred and twenty-seven memorable and official duels fought in his time, and the author of *Ireland Sixty Years Ago* states that three hundred duels by men of note were fought between 1780-1800. Even the gravest persons settled their differences in single combat. Sir Jonah's remark, "I think I

may challenge any country in Europe to show such an assemblage of gallant *judicial* and *official* antagonists at fire and sword,"<sup>1</sup> cannot be gainsaid. Scarcely a man on the bench or at the bar could be found who had not fought at least one duel.<sup>2</sup>

In 1777 a lack of uniformity in the conduct of affairs of honor was universally recognized by the gentlemen of Ireland as a crying evil no

<sup>1</sup> Barrington's *Personal Sketches*, Vol. I, p. 270.

<sup>2</sup> An extract from a long list of duels given by Sir Jonah indicates the universality of the custom among all classes : —

"The Lord Chancellor of Ireland, Earl Clare, fought the Master of the Rolls, Curran.

"The Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Right Honorable Isaac Corry, fought the Right Honorable Henry Grattan, a Privy Counsellor.

"The Chief Justice C. P., Lord Norbury, fought Fire-eater Fitzgerald, and two other gentlemen, and *frightened* Napper Tandy and several besides : only one hit.

"The provost of the University of Dublin, the Rt. Hon. Hely Hutchinson, fought Mr. Doyle, master in Chancery, — and some others.

"Counsellor O'Connell fought the champion of the Corporation, Captain d' Estérre : fatal to the champion of Protestant Ascendency." — *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 271-272.



longer to be endured. A reform was consequently instituted. Delegates from different quarters met at Clonmel and drew up a code called the "Thirty-six Commandments," to hold good throughout the country. The heading of this code ran : —

"The practice of duelling and points of honor settled at Clonmel summer assizes, 1777, by the gentlemen delegates of Tipperary, Galway, Mayo, Sligo, and Roscommon, and prescribed for general adoption throughout Ireland."

In his chapter on the "Fire-Eaters," Barrington declares that a duel was considered a necessary part of a young man's education, but in no way a ground of future animosity toward his opponent. "No young fellow," he says, "could finish his education till he had exchanged shots with some of his acquaintances. The first two questions always asked as to a young man's respectability and qualifications, when he proposed for a lady-wife, were, 'What family is he of?' — 'Did he ever blaze?'"<sup>1</sup>

The duelling mania began to die out toward 1800, though long after that date duels were not of very rare occurrence. It was well on in

<sup>1</sup> Barrington's *Personal Sketches*, Vol. I, p. 273.

the nineteenth century that Daniel O'Connell was challenged by Disraeli for having referred to him in a speech to his constituents as "a lineal descendant of the impenitent thief." Charles Lever, one of the Irish novelists, called out S. C. Hall, the husband of another Irish novelist, travelling all the way to London for an exchange of shots, though for some reason or other the meeting never took place; and the duel of another Irish writer, Maginn, with Grantley Berkeley is a well-known incident of literary history. Duelling has had its day, and is now in disfavor; but the men of a century ago dwelt on its advantages: bad blood was got rid of; it wiped out old scores; and it put a stop to the everlasting lawsuits in which Irishmen seemed to be always involved, for the "trigger process" set aside the legal.

The gentry of Ireland were notoriously hard drinkers, and on this score surpassed those of the same class in England. Englishmen were astonished at their capacity and endurance. An attorney named John Howard, writing in 1776 on the evils of his profession and the need of reform, said it was a common remark of



English men of business who visited Dublin that "they could not conceive how men in this kingdom transacted any business, for they seemed to do nothing but walk the courts the whole morning, and devote the whole evening to the bottle."<sup>1</sup> Habits of intemperate drinking were very general in the last half of the eighteenth century, and, as in the case of duelling, not even the gravest were exempt from this indulgence. "The great end and aim of life in the upper classes," says the author of *Ireland Sixty Years Ago*, "... seemed to be convivial indulgence to excess. The rule of drinking was that no man was allowed to leave the company until he was unable to *stand*, and then he might depart if he could walk." The writers of memoirs have thought it worth while to chronicle many of the customs that prevailed among the convivialists of the day. Under the head of "Customs and Precepts of Drinking," the writer quoted above mentions the following among many others. Round-bottomed decanters, which could not stand of themselves but must pass from hand to hand, were used to prevent the stopping of the bottle. The stems

<sup>1</sup> *Ireland Sixty Years Ago*, p. 58.

of glasses were knocked off with a knife so that the glasses must be emptied before they could be set upon the table again. Sir Jonah Barrington tells a tale of a host who was entertaining a number of gentlemen at dinner. When the viands were removed, and the gentlemen sat over their wine, he arose, locked the door, tossed the key out of the window to a servant, and announced that the doors would be opened at the close of the festivities. Not the least ingenious of the devices contrived by the thirsty souls to spur on lukewarm devotees to the bottle and prevent "stealing away" was that of a host who possessed a mechanical side-board that of its own volition took up a position across the door after the feast was well under way. But these efforts, to judge from innumerable anecdotes in the novels, and in the memoirs of the time illustrating the unmeasured devotion to the bottle, were altogether works of supererogation.

T. C. Grattan, in *Highways and Byways*, gives a picturesque illustration of the convivial customs of the time in an anecdote of the days of his youth. He was the guest of a country squire at dinner. The entertainment went on

for hours in the usual hilarious way, when suddenly the host called for silence; the servant was summoned, and ordered to open the shutters, whereupon the bright light of a sunny morning poured in upon the revel. Through the window were seen the huntsmen, the hounds, and the horses ready saddled, and those who were able were invited to step from the table into the saddle, and powdered off across country after the dogs.

Another striking feature of this society, as it was in fact of every social class, was the passion for giving a touch of absurdity to every transaction of life. It was carried into even life-and-death matters — duelling, for instance. Thus Fitzpatrick, in his *Life of Lever*, tells of a duel fought indoors across the table of the dinner-room, in which the seconds, lightly regarding their responsibilities, charged the pistols with squibs of powder and red-currant jelly, and then stood by to enjoy the astonishment of the principals, as each stared aghast at the apparently frightful damage done the countenance of his opponent. It must have been with something of a sense of comic incongruity too, that politicians, judges on the bench, and

ministers of state emulated the performances of the hilt-and-muzzle boys, until it was said of some that they "shot into preferment." The proceedings of the Hell-Fire Club, the Pinkindies, and like associations had always some touch of savage humor. In fact, it was certainly a whim of the day, or a national trait perhaps, to turn the tragic to grotesque and the serious to burlesque.

The leaders of fashion in the days of 1782 kept up princely establishments and gave entertainments on the grand scale. The court of the viceroy set the pace, and the rest were not slow to follow. The seeds of extravagance had been sown in the past by the social conditions under which many of the nobility and gentry grew up, and they flowered at this time. All seemed running a wild race to ruin, the effects of which were felt far into the following century. Coaches-and-six and coaches-and-four were plenty. These, with long rows of carriages and horsemen, made gay the fashionable drives of Dublin. But the pace was too rapid to be sustained. The Rebellion and the Union brought the revel abruptly to an end. The crash came with the Union. Many of the

gentry were embarrassed; many were utterly ruined. An exodus took place to the country or to the continent to recuperate from the effects of this reckless profusion and extravagance.

The contrast between the life of these wits, duellists, and convivialists, which centred in Dublin, and the life of the peasantry in the country at large was even stronger than the usual contrast between the life of gayety, wealth, and fashion and the life of the sons of the soil. The eighteenth century was for the peasant, crushed into quiescent misery by the code, a time of wretched discontent. The legal tyranny under which the peasants groaned left them, as Swift bitterly said, "hewers of wood and drawers of water to their conquerors." They were mainly cotters, sunk in extreme poverty. Cold and famine killed them off by thousands.

It has been said that the two aims of the penal laws were to transfer the land of Ireland from Catholic to Protestant hands and to extirpate Romanism. In the first aim they were eminently successful; in the second they failed completely. The measure of their success in

eradicating Catholicism lay in the apostasy of numbers of Catholic gentlemen to save their estates. On the whole, persecution had its usual effect. It only served to deepen faith, to crown it with a halo, and to make it dear and sacred to the mass of people. Throughout a long ordeal of religious persecution the majority of the peasantry remained faithful to their creed, and emerged from the trial penetrated with an attachment to it, unsurpassed, if not unequalled, elsewhere.

It was natural that the peasant should hate the law which to him was the maleficent power that persecuted his creed. From this feeling, in part, arose the lawlessness that characterized peasant life. This took form chiefly in the organized operations of the secret societies which waged desperate war especially upon the intolerable land system and upon the collection of tithes. They undertook to regulate the whole relation of landlord and tenant, and to enforce a system of law different from the law of the land. The outrages of the societies were systematically planned and successfully directed to the enforcement of their code. Any who infringed this code or refused



to obey the demands of the societies were punished with great atrocity. Such offenders were often mutilated or murdered; or their houses were burned, their crops destroyed, or their cattle houghed or killed. The operations of the societies were at times so extensive and successful as to reduce large districts of the country almost to anarchy.

The peasantry were as fond of breaking the King's peace as the gentry. Fighting was a common amusement. The peasants took to the cudgel as the upper classes took to the pistol. The national pugnacity found an outlet in the party and faction fights in which large bodies of men were often engaged. In the so-called Battle of the Diamond, fought in 1795, several hundred men participated, and between twenty and thirty of the combatants were left dead upon the field. In the party fights Protestants ranged themselves against Catholics. The faction fights were not religious quarrels, but grew out of private feuds which often divided the fighting men of a village into hostile ranks.

The penal laws kept the peasantry as ignorant as they were poor and lawless. They could

not, like the well-to-do Catholics, send their children to the continent to be educated, and whatever education they received was from the hedge-schoolmasters, who, in spite of statutes and informers, established themselves here and there throughout the country.

It is to this life of the poor Catholic peasantry and inactive Catholic gentry, alike depressed by legal tyranny, and to the life of the Protestant gentry, unduly stimulated to recklessness and gayety by their political fortune, that the Irish novelists generally turn for the scenes, incidents, and types of their stories.



## CHAPTER II

### THE NOVELISTS OF THE GENTRY

THE picturesque and interesting life of Ireland was first brought into fiction by Miss Edgeworth. She is the earliest of the novelists to be considered here,—the group of Irish novelists whose literary activity began before the middle of the nineteenth century, and who wrote of Irish life, for the most part, as it was between 1750 and 1850. These novelists constitute, roughly speaking, a group by themselves in giving an account at first hand—or at least such as they received from the lips of the preceding generation—of social conditions, of modes of existence, types of character, and ways of thought and feeling, which, from the effects of the great famine of 1847, and under the influence of the writers of 1848, underwent sudden and radical changes, and have now passed away forever, or survive only here and

there in remote corners of the land. Within this group there are two classes of novelists — the novelists of the gentry and the novelists of the peasantry ; or more explicitly those who on the whole take the point of view of the gentry and write in the spirit of the gentry, and those who on the whole take the point of view of the peasantry and write in the spirit of the peasantry. And among the novelists of the gentry there is a division, also, into those who write chiefly of the gentry and those who write chiefly of the peasantry.

I. *The novelists of the gentry who write chiefly of the gentry*

Miss Edgeworth, who came of an old County Longford family of English descent that had been settled at Edgeworthstown for nearly two hundred years, was by the circumstances of her life admirably fitted for her work as a novelist of manners. She was born in England in 1767 and lived there until she was fifteen years of age. When she came to make her home in Ireland she was thus old enough to be struck by the strangeness and quaintness of Irish life, and not too old to

come to a good understanding of it and sympathy with it. Assisting her father as his factor in all the details of the management of a large estate, and participating in all his schemes for the education and improvement of the tenants, she came to know the Irish peasant intimately. Visits to friends and relatives of the countryside gave her also a varied knowledge of the country life of the nobility and gentry. For the best part of eighteen years before her first Irish novel appeared Miss Edgeworth was a shrewd observer of Irish society. During these years she also saw something of English country life, of society in London and Dublin, and of the great world in these cities and on the continent. Travel and society gave to her pictures of Ireland a certain perspective that is often wanting in Irish fiction.

Miss Edgeworth's personality was what might be guessed from her novels — lively, witty, shrewd, kindly, warm-hearted, and withal a trifle prim and old-maidish. In many respects she was un-Irish. Her evenness of spirits, restraint, and prudence equal to every occasion, were not peculiarly the traits of her compatriots. It was her temperament that

set the limits to the reach of her sympathy with Irish character, genuine and hearty as that sympathy was so far as it went. She had not the key that unlocks the Irish nature in its extremes of feeling, and in the quick changefulness — from joy to sorrow, from love to hate, from buoyant mirth to reckless fury — which makes up its mysterious diversity.

Miss Edgeworth was of those who find entire satisfaction in their environment. Her domestic life was one of rare contentment and quiet happiness. Her love for her home and all the family circle was strong; her father, in particular, whose didactic propensities exercised from the literary point of view so evil an influence upon her, was her idol, and implicitly trusted as guide, philosopher, and friend.

It was, perhaps, a result of this happy, busy, contented life upon a conscientiously and carefully managed estate, where the evils of the *status quo* were minimized, that, while she strove to correct the social evils of her country and to establish good relations between landlord and tenant by exposing all that tended to estrange them, she shows in her stories no sign of discontent with the existing order of things,

and carefully avoids referring to the most important causes of Irish misery—the religious and political. She is quite aware of the faults and vices of Irish society and the national character,—idleness and improvidence, ignorance and drunkenness, rack-renting, middlemen, and the other fruits of absenteeism; but she never points to the state of the laws as responsible for their existence and continuance.

Four phases of life find expression in the four Irish novels that came from Miss Edgeworth's pen. The first of these, and the first novel of Irish life, *Castle Rackrent* (1800), serves admirably as an introduction to the Irish squirarchy of the last half of the eighteenth century. The story touches at the start upon one of the great national ills,—a gentry rendered irresponsible by the same social conditions that made the peasantry ignorant, lawless, dependent, and peculiarly in need of a strong, wise leadership. It is a faithful picture of a national disorder in an acute stage, which, running its course, in a few generations wound up the career of a good part of the old families of the land. The story presents several broadly

sketched Irish types, and gives glimpses into the ménage of an Irish country house of the period.

The story of the Rackrents is told by old Thady, the steward, in his own words. The Rackrent family is one of ancient ancestry and high pretensions, and possessed of a good estate which still allows them to think themselves the first people in the district. Sir Patrick, the first of them to appear, is the type of the home-bred country gentleman of the true festive, hilarious, and hard-going variety. He is the Irish Squire Western, except that he wants the latter's shrewd eye to the main chance. Old Thady describes the boundless generosity and barbarous profusion that were the glory of Castle Rackrent when Sir Patrick reigned, with the pride and enthusiasm which such displays never failed to kindle in the breast of an Irish retainer. Sir Patrick is celebrating his succession to the estate : —

“Now it was,” says Thady, “the world was to see what was in Sir Patrick. On coming into the estate he gave the finest entertainment ever was heard of in this country ; not a man could stand after supper but Sir Patrick



himself, who could sit out the best man in Ireland, let alone the three kingdoms itself. He had his house from one year's end to another as full of company as it could hold, and fuller ; for rather than be left out of the parties at Castle Rackrent, many gentlemen, and those men of the first consequence and landed estates in the country, made it their choice often and often, when there was no room to be had for love nor money, in long winter nights to sleep in the chicken house, which Sir Patrick had fitted up for the purpose of accommodating his friends and the public in general, who honored him unexpectedly with their company at Castle Rackrent ; and this went on I can't tell how long. The whole country rang with his praises ! Long life to him !... A few days before his death he was very merry ; it being his honor's birthday, he called my grandfather in — God bless him ! — to drink the company's health.... Then he fell to singing the favorite song he learned from his father ; for the last time, poor gentleman, he sung it that night as loud and hearty as ever, with a chorus : —

' He that goes to bed, and goes to bed sober,  
Falls as the leaves do, falls as the leaves do, and dies in  
October ;  
But he that goes to bed, and goes to bed mellow,  
Lives as he ought to do, lives as he ought to do, and dies  
an honest fellow.'

Sir Patrick died that night : just as the company rose to drink his health with three

cheers, he fell down in a sort of fit and was carried off ; they sat it out, and were surprised, on inquiry in the morning, to find that it was all over with poor Sir Patrick. Never did any gentleman live and die more beloved in the country by rich and poor.”<sup>1</sup>

The inscription on the stone set up in Rackrent Church in memory of Sir Patrick might have served as the epitaph of half the gentry of the kingdom, — “Sir Patrick lived and died a monument of old Irish hospitality.”

Against the thriftlessness and wild waste that in general belonged to the gentry, there was an occasional reaction in the shape of persons given over to avarice. Such characters were peculiarly offensive to the generous, free-handed Irish nature. One may look in vain in the Irish novels to find a character in whose make-up closeness or avarice is an element presented in an amiable light. Characters like Sir Walter’s antiquary do not find a place in the affections of the Irish. This feeling accounts for Thady’s contempt for Sir Murtagh, who succeeded to the Rackrent estate at the end of Sir Patrick’s glorious reign. Sir Murtagh is a skinflint : —

<sup>1</sup> *Castle Rackrent*, pp. 12-13.



“The new man did not take at all after the old gentleman ; the cellars were never filled as they used to be ; the tenants even were sent away without their whiskey. I was ashamed myself, and knew not what to say for the honor of the family.”<sup>1</sup>

Sir Murtagh is a hard landlord, too, who grinds the face of the poor and harasses them with vexatious exactions. The easy-going gentry often let the tenants' rent run on, if they themselves were not pressed for ready money ; and when they were pressed, made the collecting of rents a levying of tribute, expecting the tenants on account of past indulgence to pinch themselves, if need be, to meet their demands. The tenants preferred these informal ways to regular business methods. Sir Murtagh disregarded the good old customs, insisting upon prompt payment in the English fashion. Hence Thady's sneer, in the passage describing Sir Murtagh's ways with the tenants, about making English tenants of them all : —

“But Sir Murtagh was as much the contrary way ; for let alone making English tenants of them every soul, he was always driving and driving, and pounding and pounding, and cant-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

ing and canting, and replevying and replevying, and he made a good living of trespassing cattle; there was always some tenant's pig or horse, or cow, or calf, or goose, trespassing, which was so great a gain to Sir Murtagh that he did not like to hear me talk of repairing fences. Then his heriots and duty work brought him in something: his turf was cut, his potatoes set and dug, his hay brought home, and, in short, all the work about his house done for nothing; for in all our leases there were strict clauses, which Sir Murtagh knew well how to enforce; so many days' work of man and horse, from every tenant, he was to have, and had every year; and when a man vexed him, why the finest day he would pitch on, when the cratur was getting in his own harvest, or thatching his cabin, Sir Murtagh made it a principle to call upon him and his horse. So he taught 'em all, as he said, to know the law of landlord and tenant." <sup>1</sup>

Sir Kit, who came into the estate on Sir Murtagh's death, is a figure almost as familiar to English as to Irish life, a gentleman adventurer, one of those dashing, irresponsible, impecunious young Irishmen who made Bath their hunting-ground in the middle of the last century, where they went to try their luck at play, or perchance to mend their broken fortunes by

<sup>1</sup> *Castle Rackrent*, p. 15.

running off with an heiress. Often strangers to English society, hailing from parts unknown, with nothing to lose and all to win, they were looked at askance by English gentlemen as adventurers, and by the match-making mammas at Bath as dark horses in the matrimonial market. At the same time they commanded by their readiness with sword and pistol a certain deference from all sides. They were interesting to the young ladies, and by their dash, gallantry, and deluding ways occasionally won a rich prize and bore her off in triumph.

The Sir Kit of this story is admirably hit off. Thady describes him as bowling up to the door of Castle Rackrent "in a gig or some of them things, with another spark along with him, and led horses and servants and dogs" and again, in conversation : —

"But one morning," says Thady, "my new master caught a glimpse of me as I was looking at his horse's heels in hopes of a word from him. 'And is that all, Thady?' says he as he got into his gig ; I loved him from that day to this, his voice was so like the family; and he threw me a guinea out of his waistcoat pocket as he drew up his reins with the other hand, his horse rearing too. I thought I never set

my eyes on a finer figure of a man, quite another sort from Sir Murtagh, though withal to me a family likeness. A fine life we should have led, had he stayed amongst us, God bless him ! He valued a guinea as little as any man : money to him was no more than dirt, and his gentleman and groom, and all belonging to him, the same ; but the sporting season over, he grew tired of the place, and having got down a great architect for the house, and an improver for the grounds, and seen their plans and elevations, he fixed a day for settling with the tenants, but went off in a whirlwind to town just as some of them came into the yard in the morning.”<sup>1</sup>

After Sir Kit has spent his fortune he marries a rich Jewess to recover himself, and ends his life in a duel, the result of an entanglement with three young ladies. His wife is ill and her demise expected. Each of the three ladies claims the promise of his hand in the event of his lady's illness proving fatal, and their several brothers each claim a shot at him by way of satisfaction. Of two of his opponents Sir Kit gets fairly quit, but from the third receives a ball in a vital part, and is wheeled home in a hand-barrow to die. “He never was cured of

<sup>1</sup> *Castle Rackrent*, p. 18.

his gaming tricks," is Thady's verdict on him, "but that was the only fault he had, God bless him !"

Sir Condry, described by Thady as "the most universally beloved man I have ever seen or heard of," whose endless, aimless prodigality completes the ruin of the Rackrents, and with whose death the story closes, stands best of the family as the type of the irresponsible Irish gentleman, the cause of more misery and misfortune to Irish society than even the hard landlords that crushed the poor. He is the man who loves ease and hates the bother of business ; who shirks all the cares and duties of a landed proprietor ; who refuses to look debts and difficulties in the face, and turns all over to the agent with a "settle it anyhow," or "bid them call again to-morrow." In him are seen in operation the curious code of honor and the conflicting characteristics that made the Irishman so startlingly strange and incomprehensible to other peoples ; so wayward and wrong-headed, and yet so truly good-natured ; combining in a remarkable way generosity and selfishness, unscrupulousness and honorable feeling, kind-heartedness and ferocity. Aside

from his interest as a national type, Sir Condry is attractive on his own account, because of many qualities that go to the make-up of gentlemen of the right sort, who, whatever their foibles, are kindly disposed toward the world in general, and never so content as when they leave it on more cordial terms with itself and with them. After frittering away life and fortune he dies from the effect of a drunken bet—the drinking a huge horn of whiskey punch at a draught,—the miserable death of a spendthrift and a drunkard. The death scene, as Thady presents it, is half tragic, half grotesque :—

“There was none but my shister and myself left near him of all the many friends he had. The fever came and went, and came and went, and lasted five days, and the sixth he was sensible a few minutes, and said to me, knowing me very well, ‘I’m in a burning pain all within side of me, Thady.’ I could not speak, but my shister asked would he have this thing or t’other to do him good? ‘No,’ says he, ‘nothing will do me good no more,’ and he gave a terrible screech with the torture he was in ; then again a minute’s ease, ‘brought to this by drink,’ says he, ‘where are all the friends? Where’s Judy? Gone, eh? Ay, Sir Condry has been a fool all his days,’ said he ; and that was the last



word he spoke, and died. He had but a very poor funeral after all.”<sup>1</sup>

In *Ennui* (1809) Miss Edgeworth leaves the tumultuous life of the Irish squires, who neglect their tenants and race madly to ruin, for characters and manners of another sort and of a somewhat later period. The Earl of Glenthorn is the hero, a great nobleman, possessed of estates in both England and Ireland. Like many an Irish absentee he was English-bred, and had not, since childhood, visited his Irish home. In the Earl's story of his Irish visit — doubtless a making over of Miss Edgeworth's own first impressions of Ireland — in the picture of the life of a great landlord in a remote maritime province of Ireland at the end of the last century, and in the contrast it displays between the customs of an English estate, English tastes, English prejudices, and English decorums with strange Irish ways, lies the interest of the book as a novel of manners.

The Earl of Glenthorn, afflicted with ennui, determines, as a last resort, to try to cure the malady by a visit to Ireland. The cure is efficacious beyond his hopes, for he finds him-

<sup>1</sup> *Castle Rackrent*, p. 63.

self to be, not the Earl of Glenthorn at all, but the child of a poor peasant who had put him, her own son, in the cradle of the rightful heir, and had brought up the real earl, now a blacksmith, as her boy.

The Earl, leaving his splendid country home in England, crosses to Dublin, and thence posts down through the heart of the country, exposed to the unknown and unaccustomed horrors of untidy Irish inns and indifferent food. His French and English servants follow, dismayed at the unaccustomed Irish sights and sounds, and dragged helplessly from place to place in crazy, ramshackle chaises driven by wild, ragged postilions dressed like mad beggars.

The feudal aspect that life in out-of-the-way corners of Ireland retained down even into the nineteenth century is admirably presented in the Earl's account of his arrival and reception at Glenthorn Castle : —

“ As we approached, the gateway of the castle opened, and a number of men, who appeared to be dwarfs when compared to the height of the building, came out with torches in their hands. By their bustle and the vehemence with which



they bawled to one another, one might have thought that the whole castle was in flame; but they were only letting down a drawbridge. As I was going over this bridge a casement window opened in the castle; and a voice which I knew to be Ellinor's [his faithful old nurse], exclaimed, 'Mind the big hole in the middle of the bridge, God bless Yee's!'

"I passed over the broken bridge and through the massive gate, under an arched way, at the farthest end of which a lamp had just been lighted; then I came into a large open area, the court of the castle. . . . The great effect that my arrival produced upon the multitude of servants and dependants who issued from the castle gave me an idea of my own consequence beyond anything which I had ever felt in England. These people seemed 'born for my use': the officious precipitation with which they ran to and fro; the style in which they addressed me; some crying, 'Long life to the Earl of Glenthorn;' some blessing me for coming to reign over them; altogether gave more the idea of vassals than of tenants, and carried my imagination centuries back to feudal times."<sup>1</sup>

*The Absentee* (1812) dwells upon the unhappy effects of absenteeism, both upon the lords of the soil, who turn their backs upon their homes, and upon the tillers of the soil, who are left to the mercies of a middleman. The illustration

<sup>1</sup> *Ennui*, pp. 48-49.

of the latter aspect of the question may be left to the novelists of the peasantry. In the first part of the novel some light is thrown upon the footing of a certain class of Irish absentees in the English society of the day. Lord Clonbrony, the head of an absentee family, is an absentee under protest, constrained to leave Ireland by his lady, who is anxious to make a place for herself in English society. Lord Clonbrony was somebody in Ireland, and in Dublin a person of consequence; but in England he finds himself a nobody, and in London a cipher. Looked down upon by the fine people whose society his wife is assiduously cultivating, and heartily weary of them, he beats a retreat from this fashionable set, and takes refuge in a society beneath him in rank and education, but where, at least, he is received and treated as an equal. The satire of the story (a satire not without its mark even to-day) is directed against Lady Clonbrony, who, as the representative of those Irish ladies that ape the accent, manner, and deportment of English women, finds herself no better received than her husband, but, with less pride, refuses to be repulsed by snubs and rebuffs. With infinite

care she tries to change her Hibernian accent to an English one ; her naturally free, open, good-natured and precipitate Irish manner she endeavors but too late in life to change to the stiff, sober, cold demeanor which she regards as English. But all these efforts result only in a mixture of constraint and affectation that everywhere expose her to ridicule.

By a series of splendid entertainments and by untiring devotion to social duties Lady Clonbrony wins the uncertain and unsatisfactory success of being barely tolerated in a set of sufficient social altitude to gratify her ambition. But unfortunately this precarious footing is not to be maintained : her extravagance has brought the affairs of the family to a dangerous pass, and Lord Clonbrony finds himself on the verge of ruin. The case for a return to Ireland is put strongly to Lady Clonbrony ; old faces and Irish scenes come pleasantly back to the memory ; the slights and mortifications incident to her present way of life are recalled ; the English women of fashion are set down as cold and heartless ; the motto, "One's nobody out of Lon'on," is renounced ; Lady Clonbrony, in short, consents to a return ;

and the errant lord triumphantly leads home his family to cherish the tenants and take up all the duties and responsibilities of a resident and improving landlord.

It is the Protestant gentry who have thus far appeared in Miss Edgeworth's novels. *Ormond* (1817) introduces a Catholic gentleman of the old Celtic stock.

It was one of the many anomalies of Irish life that between the Protestant landlords, who were generally alien in blood and to some degree in feeling, and their Catholic tenants a warm feudal attachment frequently grew up; it is easy then to conceive to what fervor this feudal devotion was kindled when its object was one of their own race, bred up in their own faith and traditions. The Cornelius O'Shane of *Ormond*, in whom the interest of the story as a picture of Irish life centres, is a Catholic proprietor who attaches to himself this sort of love and veneration.

Cornelius O'Shane's estates consist of a number of islands that dot a spacious lake, the Black Islands; of this realm he dubs himself the king, and is saluted by his tenants as King Corny. This monarch of the realm of a few hundred

acres had many qualities eminently popular among the lower Irish,—lavish hospitality, a barbarous profusion, great courage and spirit in quarrels or affairs of honor, and in his dealings with his inferiors a tone of absolute authority oddly blended in daily intercourse with an extreme familiarity of manner. He showed besides this a keen insight into the character of his dependants, together with a sympathy and consideration for all their customs and prejudices. His indulgence in the management of his property was another merit, but he crowned all by keeping a kitchen open to all comers.

The allegiance of the tenantry to their mock monarch, who was in effect king, legislator, and judge, represents the free and cordial devotion (owing nothing to the penal laws that strengthened the hand of the Protestant landlords while they cooled the affection of the peasantry) which went out to a proprietor of the old blood and the old faith.

The character of King Corny and the social conditions under which he lived are graphically depicted by Miss Edgeworth, and make one of the most curious and pleasing passages in her

novels considered as studies of manners. King Corny going to the hunt with hound and horn, followed by all who could ride, and by the shouts of a rabble rout of idle tenants and ragged peasant boys keen for the sport; King Corny in his home, petting or scolding the little gossoons, chatting familiarly, and cracking his joke with his tenants; or on evenings of genial merriment over the punch-bowl and pipe in company with Father Jos, the parish priest—such are some of the quaint pictures of the king of the Black Islands, a type of the Catholic country gentleman, who, in spite of confiscations and discoverers, still clung to his estate, and lived in the unambitious seclusion which the penal laws made inevitable.

Lady Morgan (Miss Sydney Owenson), whose *St. Clair, or The Heiress of Desmond* (1804) was the first Irish novel to appear after Miss Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*, was by birth, social and domestic experiences, and by her temperament, in strong contrast to her predecessor. She was the daughter of an impecunious Dublin actor, and was born in Dublin in 1777 (?). The shrewdness and self-reliance which the shifts and expedients of her early life with her



father bred in her, joined with good looks, gayety, and accomplishments—for she sang, played upon the harp, and was early the author of romances,—enabled her to take a prominent place in the literary and social life of Dublin. Her celebrity brought her to the notice of the Earl and Countess of Abercorn, of whose household she was invited to become a permanent member. It was here that she met and married the Earl's physician, Sir T. C. Morgan, abandoned Bohemia, and became eventually a conspicuous figure in the life of Belgravia.

The extravagance of her youth, her unconventional sayings and doings in Dublin and London society, her books, her spirited paper wars against hostile critics, and the eccentricities of her later years, when, be-wigged, painted, and strangely clad in the gayest habiliments, she was jocularly known as "Mamma Morgan," kept her constantly before the public eye, and provided the Dublin wags with abundance of material upon which to exercise their wits.

In her attitude toward Irish life Lady Morgan was again in contrast to Miss Edgeworth. The latter looked for no radical change in the existing system, seeking indeed to reform the

follies and vices of her compatriots, but without ever attacking the roots of the difficulty, which always struck down into political and religious conditions. It was at just these points, on the other hand, that Lady Morgan made her attack. Her books are a sign of the growth of a broader spirit of Irish nationality, and reflect the growing interest in Irish history and antiquities which went along with this.

Lady Morgan's novels, though on the whole of slight importance, nevertheless give illustrations of the working of the penal laws, of the place of the Volunteers in social life, of the plots of the United Irishmen, and of what she calls the "desk aristocracy" that sprang up just before the Rebellion. Her first two novels, *St. Clair, or The Heiress of Desmond* (1804), and *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806), are merely an expression of the growing interest in Ireland's past, which at the same period inspired a band of historical students in and out of Trinity College, and a band of Celtic scholars out of Trinity, who, in a labor of love, strove to make known to the world the imaginative work of the Celtic Irish past. *St. Clair*, in sentiment and situation a weak imitation of *Werter*, introduces an Irish



antiquary who discourses upon local legends and traditions, ancient Irish manuscripts and Celtic history, poetry, and music. *The Wild Irish Girl*, with its glimpses of the past, was in its way a surprise and revelation to the romance readers of the time, who knew nothing of the Irish customs of other days. As a romance it is a love story of gushing sentiment, not at all a "rattling Hibernian tale," as a recent literary historian, content perhaps to judge by the title page, describes it. The "prince" of Insmore, the father of the ethereal heroine Glorvina and the last of a line of princely Milesians who once owned the whole barony, is now master of but a few barren acres and the tumble-down castle of Insmore that stands in their midst. Here the old prince, in an absurdly theatrical mockery of mediæval state, presents the past in the present by retaining at the opening of the nineteenth century the customs and dress of his ancestors. Draped and decorated in the antique fashion, he strides majestically about his narrow realm like a chieftain of old. The senachie regales him with tales of his ancestors; the harper harps in the hall; the steward respectfully receives his commands; the chaplain

daily celebrates mass in the dilapidated chapel, and all the servants and tenants keep up the semblance of old vassalage. While this goes on the personages expatiate upon ancient Irish history, legend, music, ornaments, weapons, and costume, and Glorvina reads Ossian, and sings old Irish airs to her own accompaniment upon the harp.

In *O'Donnell* (1814) Lady Morgan protests against the penal laws, and the chains of the shackled Catholics are loudly clanked to excite sympathy. The hero, O'Donnell, a young man of a noble and ancient Catholic family, is left fatherless and penniless. He is confronted at once with the problem of education. It was against the law for an Irish Catholic to go to school. He was too poor to go to France or elsewhere, as well-to-do Catholics were wont. The problem is finally solved by the arrival in Ireland of an old relative of O'Donnell's, a priest who had distinguished himself as a churchman and diplomat in Spain, whither he had gone when the persecution of Irish priests was hottest at home. This accomplished old man had come to spend the evening of his life in his native place, and he undertakes the

education of his young kinsman. The educational problem solved, the question of a career for the young O'Donnell comes next. His taste is all for soldiering ; but the penal laws forbade Irish Catholics to serve their king as officers. He has therefore to look elsewhere. He first takes a commission in the Austrian army. Later, as an officer in the Irish brigade, he fights for monarchy and his royal patroness, Marie Antoinette, against the Revolutionists.

*Florence Macarthy* combines political satire with a romantic love tale. In writing the political satire Lady Morgan incidentally broke a lance upon John Wilson Croker, who had attacked her with coarse malignity in *Fraser's* ; and she caricatures him in the Con Crawley of the novel. Throughout the book she satirizes with all the vehemence at her command the "aristocracy of the bureau," those who had obtained government places as men who, in the dangerous years that closed the eighteenth and opened the nineteenth century, had demonstrated their loyalty as informers, as fomenters and suppressors of conspiracy, as tyrannical magistrates, or as legal scavengers ready for work too dirty for the hands of crown lawyers, and

eager to serve the government, wrong or right.

Darby Crawley, as one of the "desk aristocracy," is the target for most of the satire. Vulgar, low-born, and low-bred, he began life as an attorney's clerk. As he contrived to convince the government that he was ready for anything, good or bad, if only it was remunerative, success followed. He soon found himself in line for government favor, became crown solicitor, county treasurer, magistrate, commander of an Orange Yeomanry Corps, and agent for the estate of a great absentee lord. Wealth flowed in upon him; he became a man of influence and consideration, with strings of dependants, a great villa in the country, and a fine establishment in Dublin. In character Darby is a mean self-seeker, who overlays cruelty and creeping cunning with a broad native humor and drollery that blind some to his real nature, and disarm the contempt of others who see through him.

The principal events of *The O'Briens and O'Flahertys*, the best of Lady Morgan's national tales, fall between the year 1793 and the Rebellion of '98. The novel was pub-

lished in 1827, when O'Connell had brought the Irish question into prominence with the public and with Parliament. The timely appearance of the book sent it through three editions in the first year. The novel is first a story of the activities of the patriots as they drift in a steady undercurrent to the Rebellion.

The young hero, Murrough O'Brien, a representative patriot, is, at the opening of the novel, a Trinity College student. The story gives a glimpse of Trinity College life in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Two sets of students were in evidence in those days. The one set consisted for the most part of the sons of the nobility and gentry fresh from their homes in the country, now turned loose upon the town, and bent on enjoying it. They were jealous supporters of the principles of Ascendancy — students of the type best depicted by Lever, roisterers who were never so happy as in breaking the king's peace, beating the watch, starting a street fight, or joining in a tavern brawl. The other set of students were of a serious bent, ardent patriots, striving to find a way to realize their hopes for the freedom and happiness of Ireland, and bending their energies

toward a solution of questions that clamored for immediate attention.

O'Brien was of this second set. He was a fiery champion of Catholic freedom and parliamentary reform, which he boldly defended with tongue and pen, as speaker and political pamphleteer. He was also a leader in the Historical Society, which, in its origin merely a college debating club, became eventually a training-school for patriots. A society, voicing, as did this, the most radical views, of course clashed with the University authorities, who were mostly imbued with the narrowest bigotries of their class and creed, and was suppressed. The expulsion of O'Brien and other leaders followed, and this expulsion was the first important step in the young patriot's career, an experience he shared with Robert Emmet, for example, and other fiery and outspoken lovers of their land.

Of course as a patriot O'Brien was a member of the Volunteers, a captain in the self-organized national army, which, in 1782, when England was harassed by enemies, backed Ireland's demand for a Parliament free from English control. He was also a member of the United



Irishmen, as, of course, the typical patriot must needs have been. Lord Edward Fitzgerald (Lord Walter Fitzwalter is the name given to him) plays a part in the story. He is a college friend of O'Brien's. It is he who persuades him to become a United Irishman, and brings him to the councils of Rowan, Wolfe Tone, Napper Tandy, and others of revolutionary fame. This story passes over the days of the Rebellion itself, and tells in a hasty conclusion how O'Brien played his part in the uprising, finally escaped to France, and became one of Bonaparte's generals.

Thomas Colley Grattan (1792-1864), and Charles Robert Maturin (1782-1824) worked in small measure the vein which Miss Edgeworth and Lady Morgan opened. In Grattan's "The Priest and the Garde-du-Corps"<sup>1</sup> the Irish Catholic gentleman and the penal laws confront each other. Unwilling to be ground under the wheels of the code, the Catholic hero seeks a career in the French army, and becomes an officer in the body-guard of Marie Antoinette. Contact with French scepticism results in his abandonment of the creed of his church.

<sup>1</sup> *Highways and Byways.*

Eventually he returns to Ireland. The code is still in effect. By renouncing the Roman creed in form, as he has done in fact, he might secure immunity from the disabilities and persecution under which the Papists labored ; but unwilling to lay himself open to the natural implication that his apostasy was the act of a timid, prudential turncoat, he resolved to stand by the faith. He therefore makes it a point of honor to maintain an outward adherence to a church whose faith he has discarded.

Maturin, in his day a figure of considerable proportions as novelist and dramatist, though now but a name, was an eccentric whose oddities added to the gayety of the capital. He was a clergyman of the Irish Establishment, a popular preacher and controversialist, all his life the sworn enemy of two redoubtable antagonists, Romanism and Calvinism, the one of which he attacked as at war with reason, the other as the most cruel and mournful of theologies.

His strange freaks led people to think him mad with the madness allied to genius. He took himself very seriously as an author. During the throes of composition it was his



custom to paste a red wafer over his brow to warn his household that the creative process was going on and must not be interrupted. In *Woman, or Pour et Contre* (1818) Maturin attempts, for once, to attend to an actual phase of Irish life — the life of the Methodists.

The story gives Maturin's notion of the working effects of Methodism upon those who professed it. A clergyman of the Establishment, he treats his subject, if not with unfairness, at least with professional rigor. All that could be attributed to these dissenters in the way of narrow prejudice and limited views, distrust of literature, art, and harmless amusements, cant, hypocrisy, and morbid, dreary religiosity is brought out in full relief. The dissenters of this novel are far from engaging either in their doctrines or their social life. Exposed to the scorn of the Establishment and of Catholicism, they present a sullen and forbidding front to their enemies. This book does full justice to that side of dissent which Irishmen of the Established Church and Irish Catholics found ridiculous, repellent, and contemptible.

No one of the Irish novelists is more imbued with the gay, frank, companionable spirit of his

class than William Hamilton Maxwell (1792–1850). Though of an Ulster family, he lived much in the west, and for the material of his stories turned almost entirely to Connaught. His natural bent was for soldiering, but under strong family pressure, and on the promise of an elderly relative to make him her heir on the condition of his taking the church for a profession, he finally consented to give up the army and become a clergyman. He settled at Balla, a town in the far west of Ireland, where game was abundant and parishioners scarce. It was in the west that he and Charles Lever met and became boon companions. As a devoted sportsman and as an author, Maxwell passed his time pleasantly enough, dividing his attention between field sports and writing, until deprived of his living for non-residence. He is an admirable example of the sporting parson of a type that was dying fast at the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

Besides his best works, which will be noticed in connection with Lever's stories of life in the west, Maxwell is the author of two historical novels, *O'Hara, or 1798* (1825) and *The Dark Lady of Doona* (1836).

*O'Hara*, a picture of the Rebellion in the north, is the story of a Protestant gentleman of that province, an owner of large estates, who casts in his lot with the United Irishmen. The government attaints him of treason, he is tried by a jury of drunken bigots, and hanged as a traitor. After his father's death the hero takes up his father's work, and throws himself heart and soul into the Rebellion. The interest of the book centres in the accounts of the fighting in the north. The hero is a leader of the rebels in the attack on Antrim. The book throws some light on the nature of the friction between the Catholic and Protestant commanders, the bigotries that continually threatened the solidarity of the rebel forces, and the tact and patience needed to keep the allies on friendly terms.

*The Dark Lady of Doona*, a weak, historical novel in Scott's manner, attempts a picture of sixteenth-century Irish life, and takes for a heroine Grace O'Malley, an Amazonian Irish lady, known to history, and once a visitor at Elizabeth's court.

Charles James Lever, a close friend of Maxwell's, born in Dublin in 1806, was the son of a

Dublin architect of English descent. His life was varied, if not adventurous. He graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, and later took the degree of bachelor of medicine at Göttingen. Sometime before 1832 he visited America, and with a strange whim for a wild life settled himself among the Indians, and was admitted, it is said, to tribal privileges, ingratiating himself so successfully with his savage friends that he could only escape from them by a strategy. Returning to Ireland, he studied medicine, and in the cholera outbreak of 1832 was appointed to a district of which Kilrush in Galway was the headquarters, where he did his duty courageously among the stricken peasantry. It was at Kilrush that *Lorrequer* was begun. There also he met William Hamilton Maxwell. They were birds of a feather, and amused themselves by concocting elaborate and successful practical jokes upon their acquaintances. It is said that Maxwell's example encouraged Lever's habits of extravagance, and taught him the fear of duns and bailiffs. Later he moved into Ulster and practised medicine around Coleraine and Newtown-Limavady. As he had spent vacations in the south, he was thus early more

or less acquainted with the four provinces of Ireland. He left the north for Brussels, where he acted as physician to the embassy, though never formally appointed. In Brussels *Lorrequer* was completed, and *O'Malley* and *Hinton* begun and finished. The success of these books led to the offer of the editorship of the *Dublin University Magazine*, which Lever accepted in 1842, and held for three years.

At this time Lever is described as a man of powerful frame, full-bodied, and impressing every one with a sense of health and physical completeness. He was hearty, laughter-loving, impulsive, full of dash and go to the highest possible pitch, with unflagging animal spirits and an endless flood of wit and mirth. Out of this robust health and sanguine temperament grew his easy-going philosophy of life.

To know Lever as he was during the three years of his editorship of the magazine is to know him pretty completely. On assuming the editorship he established himself in a spacious house near Dublin, and gave proof of his convivial tastes by dispensing a boundless hospitality. At his table the brilliant men of conservative Ireland met together, — statesmen, men of

letters, barristers, artists, churchmen, or any one who could tell a good story, sing a good song, or play good whist. Thackeray, who visited him at this time, said he had met no such collective agreeability anywhere else. Lever's love for society amounted to a passion. When deprived of it he could only chew the cud of bitter fancy. He loved wit and fun, and displayed both as a conversationalist. Friends said that Lever the writer was nothing to Lever the talker, and that he played his best rôle before that best of audiences — the audience round a dinner-table. The wildest stories circulated in Dublin concerning the convivialities at his home. They were gross exaggerations ; for though Lever was always prone to cakes and ale, and despite the thirsty souls who throng his novels, he himself always looked for quality rather than quantity in his potations. Thriftlessness and extravagance were among Lever's failings. After honest and repeated efforts at economy he abjured it entirely under the rooted conviction that it was absolutely incompatible with his disposition. Besides his passion for fun, society, and conviviality he had a passion for play. He played whist with the



greatest enthusiasm from the cradle to the grave ; and the fact that he lost on the whole was perhaps due to his way of keeping up a running fire of jest and anecdote all through the game. Lever had also a passion for horses, and his taste in horse-flesh was fastidious. In spite of thriftlessness and expensive tastes, and though he was continually in debt, he seems always to have paid his way in the end.

The year 1845 put an end to his Dublin life. Dublin was no place just then for triflers. Party spirit ran high, and Lever's good-humored tolerant toryism would no longer pass muster with the magazine. He found himself uncomfortably between the points of mighty opposites. Tory journals complained of his lukewarm partisanship. The Young Ireland press attacked him with a point and pertinacity that, as he said himself, often left him "biting his pen for hours." It regarded him as a buffoon novelist, a parodist of the national character, and a political weakling. The splendid sincerity of the Young Irelanders, though it put him completely out of countenance, still appealed to him and turned his sympathies in a measure outside the camp where he



belonged. Stung by criticisms that came at him like hornets from every side, in a pique with Ireland and the Irish, he committed the unpardonable sin of his fun-and-frolic philosophy by falling into ill health and ill humor, and resolved to leave Ireland. The rest of his life he spent wandering about the continent, changing his residence every few years. He managed to live in the best society, playing whist and roulette wherever he went, and dashing off at intervals a three-volume novel, when debts became pressing or money was needed for a new move. Among other places he lived in Carlsruhe, Baden-Baden, Florence, Spezzia (where he held a sinecure position as vice-consul), and finally at Trieste, where he was consul. The Trieste appointment Lord Derby tendered him with the words, "Here are £600 a year for doing nothing; and you, Lever, are the very man to do it." Lever died at Trieste in 1872. Lever's scheme of life involved the banishment from thought and sight of the disagreeable and serious, the enjoyment of fun, hilarity, cheerful company, and the best of food and drink. In many ways he is a fair representative of a certain type

of Anglo-Irishman of the Union period. On the whole his temperament and physique got for him as much enjoyment from the earthy things that make the world pleasant as they can afford, and few men have laughed and grown fat with a success so complete.

Among Lever's novels the prime old favorites are *Harry Lorrequer*, *Charles O'Malley*, and *Jack Hinton*. These are the typical rollicking novels, the noisiest novels ever written, in which uproar, riotousness, practical joking, duelling, inebriety, and assault and battery reign supreme. Pictures of town life and life in the west fill a good part of these stories. Though the actions of two of the three are supposed to fall in the years just after the opening of the nineteenth century, their spirit and the aspect of the society they reflected belong to pre-Union days.

The hero of these three stories is pretty much the same person whether he is called Harry Lorrequer, Charles O'Malley, or Jack Hinton (who is nominally an Englishman). This hero of Lever's is, in his traits, feelings, and springs of action, typical of the young Irish gentleman soldier of an earlier day, as he

was or wished to be — a light-hearted, buoyant, witty, hair-brained sort of fellow, with always a gentlemanly, well-bred way with him in spite of noisy, half-swaggering ways ; considering scarce any sacrifice too great to secure the gratification of the moment, or a moment's freedom from annoyance ; with a wonderful capacity of enjoyment, and overflowing with all the happiness that food, drink, and physical well-being can afford. It is with the eyes of such a hero that life and society in town and country are seen.

When Harry Lorrequer, the hero of the story of that name, is introduced, he is settling himself in barracks at Cork. He is an officer in one of his Majesty's regiments which has just returned from a peninsular campaign. His account of the way he and his brother officers killed time in Cork will suggest the kind of town life Lever's heroes lead, and make plain the appropriateness of the terms "rollicking" and "rattling" so generally applied to these novels. Lorrequer writes in his *Confessions* : —

"We were soon settled in barracks ; and then began a series of entertainments on the side of the civic dignitaries of Cork which soon

led most of us to believe that we had only escaped shot and shell to fall less glorious beneath champagne and claret. I do not believe there is a coroner in the island who would have pronounced but the one verdict over the regiment, "Killed by the mayor and corporation," had we so fallen.

"First of all, we were dined by the citizens of Cork; and to do them justice, a harder drinking set of gentlemen no city need boast; then we were feasted by the corporation, then by the sheriffs, then came the mayor, solus, then an address, with a cold collation, that left eight of us on the sick list for a fortnight; but the climax of all was a grand entertainment given in the mansion-house, to which upwards of two thousand were invited. It was a species of fancy-dress ball, beginning by a déjeuner at three o'clock in the afternoon, and ending—I never yet met the man who could tell when it ended. . . .

"Such was our life in Cork—dining, drinking, dancing, riding steeplechases, pigeon shooting, and tandem driving—filling up any little interval that was found to exist between a late breakfast and the time to dress for dinner; and here I hope I shall not be accused of a tendency to boasting, when I add, that among all ranks and degrees of men, and women too, there never was a regiment more highly in estimation than the 4-th. We felt the full value of all the attentions we were receiving, and we endeavored, as best we might, to repay them."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Harry Lorrequer*, pp. 2-7.

A military friend of O'Malley's tells, in the same mess-room vein, quite a different story of life in the northern town of Londonderry.

The narrator begins with the regiment's entry into the city. Instead of the admiring crowds that awaited them elsewhere as they marched gayly into quarters, they see nothing but grave, sober, intelligent-looking faces that scrutinized their appearance closely enough, but with little approval and less enthusiasm. The Derry men looked and passed hurriedly to the counting-houses and wharfs ; the women peeped from the windows with almost as little interest as the men, and walked away again. In vain the officers ogled the pretty girls as they marched along. No sly glances half-acknowledged their admiring gaze. They might as well have wasted their blandishments upon the Presbyterian meeting-houses that with high-pitched roofs frowned down upon them. The officers were a set of good fellows, bent on fun and pleasure, and determined to add their share to the gayety of the town. Once settled, they opened the campaign as was their custom : they announced garrison balls and private theatri-

cals ; they offered a cup to be run for in the steeplechase ; turned out a four-in-hand drag, and brought over two boats to challenge the north. But when the mayor of the city called on the colonel, he heard the plan of campaign with an expression that plainly told he believed himself in questionable company. Undaunted by this chilly official welcome, however, the officers made vigorous efforts to carry out the campaign. But the men of Derry were absorbed in commerce, and did not respond to their efforts ; and the ladies of Derry were a perpetual puzzle to these veterans. They thought they had nothing to learn where young ladies were concerned ; but in Derry they faced a new problem in the "serious" young lady. The regimental balls were scantily attended, picnic invitations were politely declined, and plays were performed to empty benches.

In the face of such difficulties the social campaign was perforce abandoned, and gloom fell upon the mess. Some took to brandy and water and late hours, some read novels and Byron, and others cut into a rubber to pass an evening. A few resourceful fellows adopted a



new set of tactics, and started flirtations with the serious young ladies by demurely escorting them to meeting, and attending soirées of elders. But on the whole, the mess voted Londonderry a bore or growled out its criticisms, — “Rather Rum Ones,” “Droll People These,” “The Black North, by Jove.” Both officers and men looked with longing eyes to the south, or to glorious Galway, that paradise of the infantry, that lay off to the west of the Shannon.

In *Charles O'Malley* (1840) and *Jack Hinton* (1843) there is a series of pictures of life in Dublin, the Dublin of the period described in the song : —

“ Oh ! Dublin, sure there is no doubtin',  
Beats every city upon the *say*.  
'Tis there you'll hear O'Connell spoutin',  
And Lady Morgan making *tay*.  
And 'tis the capital of the greatest nation,  
With finest peasantry on a fruitful sod,  
Fighting like devils for conciliation,  
And hating each other for the love of God.”

*O'Malley* tells in part of life in Trinity College, Dublin. Charles O'Malley, the hero of the book, born and bred in the west, has been sent to Trinity to prepare himself for the study of the law. Once matriculated, he



promptly sorts with the wildest set in college, who spend their time in sports and racketing, and are always on the verge of expulsion. His quarters in the evening, he confesses, are more like the mess room of a regiment than the chambers of a collegian. Reading men shunned the building where he resided as they would the plague. Moustached dragoons, dashinglly dressed four-in-hand men, hunters returning splashed from a run with the hounds, were the visitors who crossed and recrossed his threshold. This is O'Malley's retrospect of his college days : —

“Within a few weeks after my arrival in town I had become a matriculated student of the university, and the possessor of chambers within its walls, in conjunction with the sage and prudent gentleman I have introduced to my readers in the last chapter. Had my intentions on entering college been of the most studious and regular kind, the companion into whose society I was then immediately thrown would have quickly dissipated them. He voted morning chapels a bore, Greek lectures a humbug, examinations a farce, and pronounced the statute book, with its attendant train of fines and punishment, an ‘unclean thing.’ . . . Under Webber's directions there was no hour of the day that hung heavily upon our hands :

we rose about eleven, and breakfasted ; after which succeeded fencing, sparring, billiards, or tennis in the park ; about three, we got on horseback, and either cantered in the Phoenix or about the squares till visiting time, after which we made our calls, and then dressed for dinner, which we never thought of taking at commons, but had it from Morrison's — we both being reported sick in the dean's list, and thereby exempt from the meagre fare of the fellows' table. In the evening our occupations became still more pressing ; there were balls, suppers, whist parties, rows at the theatre, shindies in the street, devilled drumsticks at Hayes's, select oyster parties at the Carlingford ; in fact, every known method of remaining up all night, and appearing both pale and penitent the following morning." <sup>1</sup>

These tales of O'Malley's college life, though quite sufficiently spirited and highly colored, lack the genuine, musty, academic atmosphere. It is for that reason, perhaps, that the mind of Lever's gentle reader, shadowed by a doubt as to their complete truthfulness, believes no more of them than he chooses.

*Jack Hinton* opens with pictures of military and fashionable life in Dublin. Hinton receives his first impressions of Dublin society on

<sup>1</sup> *Charles O'Malley*, pp. 73-74.

the evening of his arrival, when he is summoned, late in the night as it is, to repair to the viceroy with his credentials and despatches. It is the occasion of a Castle dinner. All have left save a few of the late sitters, the viceroy's particular friends. Ushered into the dining room, Hinton finds his Excellency still seated over the wine, surrounded by dignitaries of church and state. Presentations over, he makes one of the party, and is at once struck by the contrast between the English life to which he has been accustomed and the scene before him, surprised especially to note the hearty unreserved participation of statesmen and members of the learned professions in the lighter gayeties of society, their complete abandonment to them, and the bending of great powers to make social pleasures brilliant and attractive. Hinton gives his impressions of the occasion : —

“Amid a shower of smart, caustic, and witty sayings, droll stories, retort, and repartee, the wine circulated freely from hand to hand, the presence of the Duke adding fresh impulse to the sallies of fun and merriment around him. Anecdotes of the army, the bench, and the bar poured in unceasingly, accompanied by running commentaries of the hearers, who never let slip

an opportunity for a jest or a rejoinder. To me the most singular feature of all this was, that no one seemed too old or too dignified, too high in station or too venerable from office, to join in this headlong current of conviviality: austere churchmen, erudite chief justices, profound politicians, privy councillors, military officers of high rank and standing, were here all mixed up together into one strange medley, apparently bent on throwing an air of ridicule over the graver business of life, and laughing alike at themselves and the world. Nothing was too grave for a jest, nothing too solemn for a sarcasm. All the soldier's experience of men and manners, all the lawyer's acuteness of perception and readiness of wit, all the politician's practised tact and habitual subtlety, were brought to bear upon the common topics of the day with such promptitude and such power, that one knew not whether to be more struck by the mass of information they possessed, or by that strange fatality which could make men, so great and so gifted, satisfied to jest where they might be called on to judge." <sup>1</sup>

In the *O'Briens and O'Flahertys* Lady Morgan, picturing Castle society some twenty years earlier, in the vice-royalty of the Duke of Rutland, gives it the same brilliant, gay, and careless tone. The following scene, for example,

<sup>1</sup> *Jack Hinton*, p. 13.

would not seem out of place among Hinton's descriptions of Castle life. It is marked by even less regard for viceregal dignity and decorum than Lever's pictures. A castle dinner is in progress when the news of an alarming street riot is brought in : —

“Just as the lovely vice-queen and her bevy of beauties had risen from table, amidst acclamations much too loud for the quietude of modern *bon ton*, and while the Under Secretary whispered the news to the Chief, the Chief passed it (with the bottle) to the Chancellor, who gave it to the Commander of the Forces ; and the Commander communicated it without note or comment to the Lord Lieutenant.

“The board then proceeded to transact business, and the members of his Majesty's Privy Council filled their glasses, and gave their opinions. The contents of many wise heads and many bright flasks were now poured forth together. More troops were ordered out, and more wine was ordered up. The state butler and the first aide-de-camp were kept in perpetual activity. The wine was declared prime and the times perilous. The disbanding of the Volunteers, and the knighting of Ferns,<sup>1</sup> were orders carried in council without a dissenting voice. The policy of elevating some to the peerage, and others to the gallows, was then started by Lord Knocklofty, whose family had progres-

<sup>1</sup> A Dublin wine merchant.

sively prospered by such measures; and it was agreed to by the Lord Chancellor,<sup>1</sup> with a comment on the propriety of exterminating all the Catholics (one of his Lordship's most favorite schemes)."<sup>2</sup>

The meeting of the Privy Council over, there follows the progress of the representative of royalty from the dining room to the drawing-room : —

“At this moment a little page entering the room cried out in a fluttered voice, ‘The Lord Lieutenant!’ while the aide-de-camp on service, opening another door, the dinner party (those at least who, at an earlier hour, had not left the table, gone home, or *remained* under it) came forth. They entered the drawing-room with a burst of noise and laughter. The Duke meantime hurried joyously but not very steadily on, followed by his merry court; his eyes sparkling, his cheek flushed, and his hair disordered, beauty and inebriety combining to give his fine person the air of the youthful Bacchus. It was in vain that his Privy Council endeavored to look as sober as their calling. The Keeper of the Seals could not keep his legs; the Attorney General was served with a *noli prosequi*; the Speaker could not articulate a syllable, and

<sup>1</sup> John Fitzgibbon, Earl of Clare.

<sup>2</sup> *O'Briens and O'Flahertys*, Vol. I, p. 177.



the King's Solicitor suffered judgment to go by default."<sup>1</sup>

Lever gives considerable attention in his novels to the social campaigns of vulgar upstarts in Dublin. The best of the manners painting in this kind is that of the Rooneys in *Jack Hinton*. Mr. Paul Rooney was a lawyer of plebeian origin, who had grown rich in his profession. His highest ambition was to outshine in the splendor of his entertainments all the entertainers of Dublin. He loved beyond everything to play the host to great people. The great and titled found in him a merry fellow, whose dinners they honored with their presence, ministering to the host's vanity as they sipped his choice claret and Burgundy.

Lever loved to describe social functions, and no such description surpasses that of the Rooneys' great ball; he catches the festive spirit with all the sights and sounds of the occasion, — the crashing of plates and fiddles, the popping of corks, the dancing feet, the scraps of jest, gossip, and flirtation that reach the ear in the intervals of the mixed tumult of

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.



music and sociability. This entertainment of the Rooneys is the scene of an escapade of the jovial viceroy's, the same who presided at the dinner which gave Hinton his first glimpse of Dublin society. The Duke's aides had aroused his grace's curiosity by glowing descriptions of the splendor of Rooney's social functions, and urged him to attend and see for himself. In a spirit of frolic he consented to look in "just for a moment," and the Duke and his aides, with an escort of dragoons, clatter off to the Rooney mansion. Once there the Duke becomes so interested in the Rooneys' wine and company that he remains till daylight. One of the aides, Phil O'Grady, remarking the Duke's high spirits, resolves to turn them to his own account. O'Grady needs money, and the champagne inspires him with the plan of prevailing upon the viceroy to exercise his prerogative and knight Paul Rooney on the spot. This will delight Rooney and open his purse for a heavy loan. He suggests the idea to the Duke, who, leaning unsteadily against the banister, declares that nothing could be better, and calls for a sword with which to go through the ceremony. The sword is found, unhappily, before

Rooney himself. The Duke is impatient to knight somebody at once. O'Grady's old servant, cross Corny Delany, happens to be at hand, and the Duke, ordering him to his knees and asking what his d——d name is, grasps the sword, and slaps it heartily, not upon the shoulder, but upon his bald head, crying out at the same moment in the usual formula for the occasion, "Rise, Sir Corny Delany."

After this the Duke takes his leave, and as he steps out sees a picket of dragoons bivouacking in the middle of the street. This is his guard of honor which he had forgotten to dismiss on entering, and he retires with the pleasant consciousness that his evening's adventures will furnish matter for every caricature shop in the capital.

Whatever may be thought of Lever's pictures of the viceregal court, this story of the knight-ing of Corny is very like an actual occurrence, that in which the Duke of Rutland, in a frolic, knighted a jolly innkeeper.

Lever and Maxwell are the novelists of the men and manners of Connaught, and in the pictures of life in the west of Ireland are at their best. Connaught was the province of

Ireland notable above others for the most startling traditions of society. It was the home of the "ould, ancient families," the O'Shaughnessys, the McDermots, the Bodkins, the Blakes, and the Bradys. Here, too, the old Irishry took refuge from the persecuting hands of the heretics of the black north when their cabins were placarded with the dread notice "To Hell or Connaught." It was the paradise of the sportsman, a fine hunting country abounding in lakes and streams well stocked with trout and salmon. Maxwell describes County Galway, the favorite scene of his and Lever's western tales, as, "bounded on the south and east by Christendom and part of Tipperary, on the north by Donegal, and on the west by the *Salt Say*." The west, too, was a sanctuary for debtors. There bailiffs and process-servers penetrated at their peril, and generally beat a quick retreat after dining upon the papers they came to serve. It was the home of old Irish hospitality and conviviality. Here the gentry were wont to "exchange the lie direct and a full decanter" of an evening, and to take their satisfaction on the lawn the next morning. Lever, in his song *The Man for*

*Galway*, hits off epigrammatically this western type: —

“ To drink a toast,  
A proctor roast,  
Or bailiff as the case is;  
To kiss your wife,  
Or take your life,  
At ten or fifteen paces;  
To keep game-cocks; to hunt the fox;  
To drink in punch the Solway;  
With debts galore, but fun far more;  
Oh, that’s the man for Galway — ”

Maxwell’s *The Wild Sports of the West* (1833), the chronicle of a sporting summer and fall spent chiefly in the counties of Mayo, Sligo, and Galway, can hardly pass for a novel, though it embodies some good short stories and legends. The disciple of rod and gun will find in it a fund of reliable sporting anecdote and adventure. The novel reader will enjoy the tales and legends with which it is interspersed — indeed, the *Memoir of the Gentleman Who Would Not Do for Galway* of itself is sufficient to keep the book alive, and with Dr. Maginn’s *Bob Burke’s Duel with Ensign Brady* may stand as a representative example of the “rattling Hibernian tale.” Besides these attractions, the book

abounds in descriptions of the wild and startling landscapes of Connaught, and in faithfully painted pictures of the men and manners of that province.

*The Adventures of Captain Blake* (1836), the first of Maxwell's novels proper to deal with western life, has for its hero a young military gentleman, Captain Blake, who marries a fine lady English wife, and carries her back to his ancestral castle in County Galway. These are the young bride's first impressions of Galway life : —

“Those now around her seemed a separate race from any she had been accustomed to. Careless of the present, reckless of the future, they acted from momentary impulse, and seemed indifferent whether the result was right or wrong. The women rode, visited, dressed, flirted, danced, and married. The men hunted, shot, played, drank, quarrelled, fought, and made friends again. Out of doors there was clamor and confusion ; within a wasteful, irregular, comfortless course of dissipation, to which neither tide nor time appeared to place a limit.”<sup>1</sup>

No portrait from Maxwell's gallery of Western squires is more characteristic than that of

<sup>1</sup> *Captain Blake*, p. 57.

Manus Blake, the uncle of the Captain Blake above mentioned. A letter written by Manus Blake to his absent nephew presents the man himself, and includes a picturesque glimpse of country life in Galway. It runs in part thus : —

“ ‘DEAR JACK : You will expect, no doubt, to hear the news of the neighborhood.

“ ‘Father Roger has got the parish of Ballyboffin. The people were sadly neglected by the old priest, who was bedridden for years. Father Roger has turned over a new leaf with them, and the first Sunday he cursed them out of the face with bell, book, and candle, to show them that they must look to their souls in future.

“ ‘Tony, poor man ! broke his leg last Tuesday by a fall from the switch-tailed mare. It was a great blessing, when he was to break a bone, that it happened at the end of the season.

“ ‘A set of Ballybooley boys, the other night, took off Sibby M’Clintok, the schoolmaster’s daughter. There is a great hullabaloo in consequence, but no tidings yet. I’m glad she’s gone, for your cousin Jack was eternally dropping in. It’s not right to put temptation in a young man’s way ; and as he’s in delicate health his mother won’t allow him to be contradicted in anything.



“ ‘ Denis Corcoran burned powder for the first time, last week, in a field near Ballinasloe. It is allowed on all hands that he behaved prettily, and hit his man the second shot. One is interested naturally for a friend’s child, and indeed I always thought that Denis was a promising boy.

“ ‘ Poor Darby Moran, — a decent boy he was, — him you may remember that they called “Darby Dhu” (black), was hanged last Monday for shooting at a peeler.<sup>1</sup> It was hard enough upon him, as he only lamed the fellow for life. As he was a tenant’s son, your aunt, out of respect, sent the maid upon the jaunting-car to attend the execution. He died real game, and pleased the priest greatly before he came out upon the drop. We gave him a good wake and a fine funeral.

“ ‘ Dr. Stringer was fired at in mistake when leaving Mount Kirwan after dinner ; they shot his horse dead ; and when they discovered he was the wrong man, they made him an ample apology. They took him in the dark for Parson Milligan, who rode a gray cob, and had on a dark cottamore.<sup>2</sup>

“ ‘ Father Roger is breaking fast, and you’ll be sorry to hear it. You remember what a head he had. Two bottles of port now make him talk thick, and the third smothers him totally. More’s the pity ! A better Christian never cursed a flock ; and a companion — one might

<sup>1</sup> Policeman.

<sup>2</sup> Cottamore, a great coat.



drink with him in the dark and ask no questions.

“‘Ever your affectionate uncle,  
“‘MANUS BLAKE.’”<sup>1</sup>

Lever, in depicting western life, ranges wider than Maxwell, and observes in more detail. The best of his western scenes are in *Lorrequer*, *O'Malley*, and *Hinton*, where he gives his gayety free rein, and displays the dash and “go” which are the great attractions of his books. Life in the west, like town life, is seen through the eyes of Lever's favorite hero, — the gay young gentleman soldier.

Lever's stories throng with western types — all sorts of men, from stable boys to gentlemen, from small brothers, breaking in impiously upon the love affairs of their elder sisters, to the gouty old men who quarrel with their neighbors and shoot sheriffs and bailiffs. A bird's-eye view of Lever's western scenes may begin with O'Malley's account of the education his father gave him : —

<sup>1</sup> *Captain Blake*, pp. 194–197.

“From my earliest years his whole anxiety was to fit me for the part of a country gentleman, as he regarded that character, viz., I rode boldly with fox-hounds ; I was about the best shot within twenty miles of us ; I could swim the Shannon at Holy Island ; I drove four-in-hand better than the coachman himself, and from finding a hare to hooking a salmon, my equal could not be found from Killaloe to Banagher. These were the staple of my endowments ; besides which, the parish priest had taught me a little Latin, a little French, and a little geometry, and a great deal of the life and opinions of St. Jago, who presided over a holy well in the neighborhood, and was held in very considerable repute.”<sup>1</sup>

“The experiences of this young fellow who has introduced himself make up the picture of the west as it stands in *O'Malley*. One of these experiences was a visit to Mr. Blake, a western squire. *O'Malley* describes him and his family :—

“The head of the family was a Galway squire of the oldest and most genuine stock ; a great sportsman, a negligent farmer, and most careless father ; he looked upon a fox as an infinitely more precious part of the creation than a French governess ; and thought that riding well with hounds was a far better gift

<sup>1</sup> *Charles O'Malley*, p. 7.

than all the learning of a Porson. His daughters were after his own heart, — the best-tempered, least-educated, most high-spirited, gay, dashing, ugly girls in the country, — ready to ride over a four-foot paling without a saddle, and to dance the “Wind that shakes the barley” for four consecutive hours, against all the officers that their hard fate and the Horse Guards ever condemned to Galway.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Blake lived in the slovenly splendor and barbarous profusion that characterized the country gentry of little more than a century ago. The gate lodge was a wretched hovel; the avenue covered with weeds and deep with ruts; the great lawn before the house used as a training ground for horses; the house itself half ruinous; the broken windows stopped with whatever came handy; the steps dilapidated and falling; the doors hanging by a single hinge; the furniture handsome, but dusty and worn. O'Malley's account of the house of the Blakes recalls Swift's account of Quilca, the disorderly country place of his friend Sheridan.

A wonderful dinner in the western style was one of the incidents of O'Malley's visit to the Blakes. With the dinner came the usual high

<sup>1</sup> *Charles O'Malley*, p. 9.

tides of claret and oceans of punch, songs and hilarity, and, of course, for a grand finale, a quarrel—an insult, a glass of wine hurled in the offender's face, and a duel next morning. It was O'Malley who got into trouble. In the duel, fought on the estate of his opponent, Bodkin, O'Malley hit his man, and was peaceably departing, when a mob of Bodkin's tenants, believing their master dead, started in pursuit of his supposed murderer, bent on vengeance, and O'Malley and his second had a race home of it for their lives.

A picture of western life without a fox-hunt would be incomplete, and the great event of O'Malley's sojourn with the Blakes is the hunt arranged by the host for the amusement of his guests, among them O'Malley's rival, a supercilious English dragoon, whom O'Malley resolves to outride in the eyes of his lady, and to the glory of Irish sport. As a stirrup piece there are few things to put beside the story of this hunt, that tells how O'Malley, sweeping over ditches, streams, and towering walls, took the final preposterous and impossible, but gloriously successful, leap over the sunk fence to the everlasting honor of the Galway hunters

and the shame of the English dragoon who raced him neck-and-neck through all the hunt, only to break his beast's bones and his own over this last and greatest obstacle.

The typical Irish novel must have a contested election. There is a spirited one in *O'Malley*. Charles's uncle is one of the candidates. The house is full of his uncle's supporters, and eating, drinking, joking, and fighting go on apace night and day. Scores of Galway squires, troops of squireen gentry, bullet-headed peasants, electioneering agents, and sleek, roguish-eyed electioneering priests swarm over the lawn. "Elections of the past," says O'Malley, "were not the tame farces of later days: —

"In the goodly days I speak of, a county contest was a very different thing indeed from the tame and insipid farce that now passes under that name; where a briefless barrister, bullied on both sides, sits as assessor—a few drunken voters—a radical O'Connellite grocer—a demagogue priest—a deputy grand purple something from the Trinity College lodge, with some half dozen followers shouting to the devil with Peel, or down with Dens, form the whole *corps de ballet*. No, no; in the times I refer to the voters were some thousands in

number, and the adverse parties took the field, far less dependent for success upon previous pledge or promise made them, than upon the actual stratagem of the day. Each went forth, like a general to battle, surrounded by a numerous and well-chosen staff; one party of friends, acting as a commissariat, attending to the victualling of the voters, that they obtained a due, or rather undue, allowance of liquor, and came properly drunk to the poll; others again broke into skirmishing parties, and, scattered over the country, cut off the enemy's supplies, breaking down their post-chaises, upsetting their jaunting cars, stealing their poll-books, and kidnapping their agents. . . . Such, in brief, was a contest in the olden time; and when it is taken into consideration that it usually lasted a fortnight or three weeks, that a considerable military force was engaged (for our Irish law permits this), and which, when nothing pressing was doing, was regularly assailed by both parties—that far more dependence was placed in a bludgeon than a pistol—and that when a man who registered a vote without a cracked pate was regarded as a kind of natural phenomenon, some faint idea may be formed how much such a scene must have contributed to the peace of the country and the happiness and welfare of all concerned in it.”

The Irish novels that followed *Hinton* spread out into a broad transitional survey of Irish society, and may be considered in the main as



an illustration of the process by which the old families of the land decayed, were uprooted from the soil in which they had grown for centuries, and finally supplanted by a new race of landlords. They show how the old landlords, with all the airs and privileges of a superior class, were really, in principles and ideas, too little above those over whom they were masters, and how the growth from below upward toward education left the peasantry with a consciousness of this fact. The spirit of democracy and the debit and credit relations of political economy are seen in conflict with the old feudal idea of an exchange of service and loyalty for protection and sympathy. As service became less willingly rendered, landlords had less power, and as landlord power decreased, landlord pride and irritable tyranny increased. These novels present the strange social condition of a time when a belated feudalism, left behind in the race of civilization, was maintaining a kind of guerilla warfare against law and order, and with a measure of success that is astonishing when it is remembered that this was a state of things existing but a century since. The peasantry, bewildered



by the sundering of old ties, look to demagogues for sympathy and guidance. Lever follows the problem down a step farther to consider the position of the descendants of the ruined gentry at a remove of one or two generations, left without house or land or resources, and at a loss where to turn for support, or how to direct their energies.

But it is not only to a study of the decay of the old gentry and the growth of a new social type that Lever devotes himself, though this may be called his central theme. He illustrates also the important political and social changes from the days when the Irish Parliament became independent in 1782. He represents the condition of the country in the years preceding the Rebellion of '98; the treasonable correspondence with France; the operations of the secret societies; the counter agencies of government; the explosions of abortive plots. The period of the Union is also treated, and the immediate effects of Catholic Emancipation.

Noteworthy among these novels in one way or another are *The O'Donoghue* (1845), *The Knight of Gwynne* (1847), and *The Martins*

of *Cro' Martin* (1847). These, with *Lorrequer*, *O'Malley*, and *Hinton*, contain pretty much everything that Lever has to say of Ireland and the Irish.

In *The O'Donoghue* the impoverished Catholic gentlemen hold the centre of the stage. The story covers a period extending from just before to a little after the time when the French fleet sailed into Bantry Bay. The O'Donoghues belong to an old and illustrious Catholic family. Poor as they are proud, they live, of necessity, the life of the half-gentry, half-farmer set. Though they still dwell in the ancestral castle — a ruinous, half-furnished old barrack — they are on the point of finding themselves in the condition of the people of Mickey Free's song : —

“ Oh ! once we were illegant people,  
Though we now live in cabins of mud,  
And the land that ye see from the steeple  
Belonged to us all from the flood.  
My father was then king of Connaught,  
My grandaunt viceroy of Tralee ;  
But the Sassenach came, and, signs on it !  
The devil an acre have we.”

Crippled with debt and weighed down with mortgages, they subsist in a shifty conflict

with creditors, process servers, and bailiffs, any one of whom the butler, stationed at the front door with a loaded carbine, is prepared to shoot on sight. The degrading effect of this sort of life is illustrated in Mark O'Donoghue, the son and heir of the house. He wears a frieze coat like the peasants, and shuns the gentry, whose hospitality he cannot return. He sells horses, hunts, and fishes for a livelihood, and lives embittered by a vague sense of wrong born of his wretched circumstances. When the United Irishmen approach him with a plan for Irish independence from England through a rebellion and a French invasion, he lends a ready ear, for the old Catholíc families will then come to their own again and stand forth at the head of their old estates. He joins the United Irishmen and devotes himself to the spread of the movement in his neighborhood.

Lever had always a very particular predilection for the Irish gentleman of the old school, whom he thought the most picturesque bit of nationality of modern times. Variations of the type abound in his novels, but *The Knight of Gwynne* is the flower of them all. He

represents one of the pleasantest of Irish types, one of the class to whom close intercourse with France had lent a polish and refinement that added grace and fascination to the native geniality, heartiness, and fervor. Lever clearly embodies in him the traits of his ideal of a gentleman—frankness, high spirit, sociability, courtesy, fidelity in friendship, a nice sense of honor, brave devotion to a cause, and a chivalrous respect toward women. He gives the Knight all the paraphernalia of a great gentleman, in the description of which he always delights. He is nobly housed in an ancient Gothic mansion, set down in the centre of a wide demesne, and equipped with a stud, a kennel, a hall full of servants, and every other appanage proper to a country gentleman. Add to this a tenantry, happy and devoted, who recognize in him all the virtues of the best of landlords, and the picture is complete.

The story has also political interest. It illustrates the methods that were followed in consummating the Union of the Irish and English parliaments. The young Lord Castle-reagh, Secretary for Ireland, a type well within Lever's range, the most prominent figure in

the transaction, is notably lifelike and convincing. He belongs to a class of aristocratic politicians of an earlier day, who lived by the game and frankly held all means fair to win. At first he appears looking about in town and country to see what gentlemen are in the market to be bought by honors, titles, or money. His emissaries are at every club and dinner-table in Dublin, and in the houses of the country members, exerting their utmost tact to tempt and bribe without ruffling the national susceptibilities of those they approached. Castlereagh himself scatters bribes to right and left among the nobility and gentry in the most open and unblushing manner, taking no shame to himself on this score, but pursuing his course with a quiet, businesslike composure, and without the slightest indication of a moment's uneasiness, serene in the use of the basest means to the desired end. When his offers are scornfully or insultingly refused, he bears no malice, but sets down rebuffs to the credit of the outraged gentlemen's honesty and patriotism.

*The Martins of Cro' Martin* lays bare the mechanism of a great estate. The time is just after

Catholic Emancipation. The head of the Martin family is a gentleman of a later day than the Knight of Gwynne. He is the ease-loving Irish proprietor, shirking the cares of his estate, with an immense self-esteem, narrow, obstinate, weak, without ideas, and with a boundless faith in his own dignity, elegance, and divine right to rule his tenants. The story illustrates the practical working of the Catholic Emancipation Act. The peasantry, alienated by the indifference of the Martins to their interest, and hence at the mercy of demagogues, decline to give their support to the hereditary lord of the manor, and cast their votes for a candidate of their own choosing. Martin, disgusted at what he considers ingratitude and disloyalty, quits home to live abroad, leaving his estates and their tenantry to the mercies of a Scotch steward. To the Martins abroad come letters, bringing out, as is so often and effectively done in these novels, the terrible contrasts that Irish life presented — the absentee plunged in all the gayeties of London or Paris ; the peasantry at home struggling with poverty, famine, and disease, and ground under the heel of a heartless middleman.

There was something of Lever and a good



deal of Maxwell in William Maginn (1793–1842), who takes a place among Irish story-tellers by virtue of a few tales. Maginn was the original of Captain Shandon of *Pendennis*. He was of the race of witty, eccentric Anglo-Irishmen to which Goldsmith, Sheridan, and their like belong. After a brilliant record at Trinity College, Dublin, Maginn spent ten years as a schoolmaster in his native city, Cork. But his wild, wit-squandering nature was not cast in the mould of a pedagogue, and he gave up teaching to devote himself to literature in Edinburgh and London as a contributor to *Blackwood's*, *Fraser's*, and other periodicals. The irregularities of his life, and his habits of intemperance, the latter induced partly perhaps by the Bohemianism that flourished so vigorously in journalistic circles in the early days of the nineteenth century, gradually brought his affairs into hopeless disorder, and sent him into hiding to escape the sheriff's officers. In vain kind friends came to the rescue, Thackeray, with his characteristic generosity lending him, or in plain terms giving him, on one occasion, £500. Drink, improvidence, and a defiance of all the laws of living were for long unable to quench the audacious



gayety of his nature ; but at last they broke him in health and fortune, and, fairly beaten in the battle of life, he died in his forty-ninth year.

There is little of Irish life in any of Maginn's stories, but the Hibernian spirit rules in all, and certain Hibernian traits find abundant illustration. It is the *Memoirs of Morgan Odoherty*, *Bob Burke's Duel with Ensign Brady*, *The Story Without a Tail*, and a few other productions that give him a nook in the company of story-tellers here considered. The first of these is an account in a vein of broad comedy of the loves and adventures of Ensign Odoherty of the King's Own Tipperary Regiment in the land of Saints, in England, Scotland, and on the continent, and includes selections from the occasional and other poems of that swaggering and voluble subaltern. *Bob Burke's Duel* tells of the desperate encounter between Bob Burke and the ensign of the 48th, and records circumstantially how, in that affair, Bob hit the ensign on the waistcoat pocket, which, wonderful to relate, contained a five-shilling piece, that saved its fortunate possessor from grim death.

*Father Tom and the Pope* (1838), which has been repeatedly attributed to Maginn, is, in

fact, strangely enough, a *jeu d'esprit* from the pen of Sir Samuel Ferguson, the interpreter of the shadowy grandeurs and fairy glammers of Celtic romance. This little masterpiece of comic extravagance tells how an Irish hedge-priest paid a visit to the Vatican, armed with two imperial quart bottles of poteen; how he introduced his Holiness to the national beverage, routed him in a theological argument, and left him at last *hors de combat*; and it tells all this in the true vein of purely native humor and with all the savor of the turf-and-whiskey wit.

II. *The novelists of the gentry who write chiefly of the peasantry*

Thomas Davis, in a criticism of Carleton, prophesied the rapid disappearance of Irish superstitions.<sup>1</sup> The prophecy has not yet been fulfilled. The fairy race still lives in Ireland, and fairy-land is still real. It is true that education, bringing a knowledge of natural law, has solved many mysteries, and weakened the belief in supernatural powers that constantly interfere in the natural course of human

<sup>1</sup> *Essays by Davis*, p. 209.

action. But to the masses who have little or no education, who see strange results and know nothing of approximate causes, every phenomenon is held to result from the direct action of mysterious, non-human powers. The Irish have always been marked by a vivid sense of relation to a spiritual and invisible world; and they have formulated a fantastic creed respecting it, a strange fusion of Christian legend and pagan myth. This creed finds expression in a rich store of fairy-lore, folk-lore, and legend; and all these take an important place in the work of the novelists, one of whom has devoted himself exclusively to them. Thomas Crofton Croker (1798-1854), as the historian of the fairies—the creatures of peasant fancy—is the first of the novelists of the gentry who take their material chiefly from peasant life. Croker came of a family of English descent that settled in the sister island in Elizabeth's reign. From boyhood he showed literary, artistic, and antiquarian tastes; and in his youth, and in the leisure of his manhood, he delighted to ramble about sketching and studying the manners and traditions of the country. In 1818 he went to London to take an office in the

Admiralty, which he held for upward of thirty years.

*The Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland* (1825) grew out of his Irish rambles and studies from his boyhood days to the time of their publication. The complete and deserved success of the book made Croker known to literary people, and led to pleasant friendships with Moore, Sydney Smith, Father Prout, Miss Edgeworth, Sir Walter Scott, and others. Miss Edgeworth and Sir Walter took particular delight in *The Fairy Legends*. For the rest Croker was a learned antiquarian, an editor and commentator upon old manuscripts and Irish songs and ballads, a constant contributor to the periodicals, and a working member of various learned societies. He takes his place among Irish story-tellers by virtue of his *Fairy Legends* and *Legends of the Lakes* (1829).

A variety of supernatural beings appear in his tales. The fairies, or "good people," as the peasantry call them, were shy creatures, who shunned the curious eyes of men, and might be seen at their approach scudding up into the sky like flights of bees. The Shefros, or fairies that lived in troops or communities, "showed" them-

selves most frequently to mortals. Jack Mulligan of "Fairies or No Fairies" surprised a troop of them in their moonlight revels. Jack was riding home after an evening spent with a friend in discussing sundry jugs of stiff punch, when he saw —

"A brilliant company of lovely little forms dancing under the oak with an unsteady and rolling motion. . . . Never did man see anything more beautiful. They were not three inches in height, but they were as white as the driven snow, and beyond number numberless."<sup>1</sup>

The favorite amusements of the fairies seem to have been fighting, frolicking, playing and singing music of their own making, feasting, dancing, and hunting. Old Tom Bourke, one of the mortals favored with the confidence of the good people and supposed to have influence with them — "fairy doctors" such were called, — used to sit and watch them playing at goal by the hour.

The fairies were devoted to the hunt, too, and Paddy Cavanagh, a man whom no one ever heard tell a lie or saw drunk, declared he met a troop of them engaged in the sport: —

<sup>1</sup> *Fairy Legends*, "Fairies or No Fairies."

“There came the darlingest little cavalcade of the prettiest little fellows you ever laid your eyes upon. They were all dressed in green hunting frocks, with nice little red caps on their heads, and they were mounted on pretty little long-tailed white ponies, not so big as young kids, and they rode two and two so nicely. . . . They took the ditch, you see, big as it is, in full stroke; not a man of them was shook in his seat or lost his rank; it was pop, pop, pop, over with them, and then, hurra! away with them like shot across the high field, in the direction of the old church.”<sup>1</sup>

The fairies of *The Fairy Legends* are, on the whole, a merry, pleasant, well-disposed tribe — a true expression of Irish nature. They have a sense of justice and fair play, and love the liberal hand and the kindly word. But they are whimsical and easily vexed, and in anger never count the cost of their caprices to mortals. Nothing vexes them more than interference with their customs and pastimes. Woe betide the man who profanes the scene of their revels with plough or spade! His cattle will fall in bog holes, his horses pine away and die, and his butter spoil. The most formidable attribute of the fairies was their habit of steal-

<sup>1</sup> *Fairy Legends*, “The Harvest Dinner.”



ing away the fairest new-born babes and leaving ugly, wasted creatures in their stead, after the manner of Robin Goodfellow's song:—

“ When larks 'gin sing  
 Away we fling  
 And babes new-born steal as we go,  
 An elf in bed  
 We leave instead,  
 And wend us laughing. Ho! ho! ho!”

Happily, a return of stolen children might be effected. In “The Brewery of Egg-Shells” (a story particularly pleasing for the pretty picture of babyhood at its close) Mrs. Sullivan found one day her blue-eyed boy of the night before withered to almost nothing in the morning. In this unhappy case an old woman, cunning in fairy lore, was called in. Her advice was to heat the poker red-hot and cram it down the ugly throat of the changeling. Mrs. Sullivan, following the advice, heated the poker, and started for the cradle; but, when there, she found the changeling had vanished, and saw in its place —

“her own child in a sweet sleep, one of his soft round arms rested upon the pillow, — his features were as placid as if their repose had



never been disturbed, save the rosy mouth, which moved with a gentle and regular breathing.”<sup>1</sup>

The Cluricaunes, Leprecaunes, and Fir Dar-rigs, unsociable fairies, old and withered, jeering and mischievous, have all a family resemblance, and belonged to a fairy race distinguished from the trooping fairies by their solitary and sottish habits. Their occupation was generally shoe-making, their recreations smoking and drinking. They were supposed to have a knowledge of buried treasure, and to carry a purse containing a magic shilling. The peasants sought always to outwit them by getting the purse, and forcing them to reveal the hiding-place of the treasure. In “Seeing and Believing” an old woman tells how she captured one when she was a girl. She was sitting in her garden, and heard a tick-tack, for all the world as if a brogue-maker were at work. Looking up, she saw—

“A bit of an old man, not a quarter so big as a new-born child, with a little cocked hat on his head, and a dudeen in his mouth smoking away, and a plain old-fashioned drab-colored coat with big buttons upon it on his back, and a pair of massy silver buckles in his shoes, that

<sup>1</sup> *Fairy Legends*, “The Brewery of Egg-Shells.”

almost covered his feet, they were so big ; and he working away as hard as ever he could, heeling a pair of little brogues. The minute I clapt my two eyes upon him I knew him to be a Cluricaune ; and as I was stout and foolhardy, says I to him, ‘God save you, honest man ! that’s hard work you’re at this hot day.’ He looked up in my face quite vexed like ; so with that I made a run at him, caught a hold of him in my hand, and asked him where was his purse of money. ‘Money ?’ said he, ‘money indeed ! and where would a poor little old creature like me get money ?’ ‘Come, come,’ said I, ‘none of your tricks : doesn’t everybody know that Cluricaunes, like you, are as rich as the devil himself ?’ So I pulled out a knife I had in my pocket, and put on as wicked a face as ever I could (and in troth, that was no easy matter for me then, for I was as comely and good-humoured a looking girl as you’d see from this to Carrignavar) and swore if he didn’t instantly give me his purse, or show me a pot of gold, I’d cut the nose off his face. Well, to be sure, the little man did look so frightened at hearing these words that I almost found it in my heart to pity the poor little creature.”<sup>1</sup>

Rather more genial than the generality of his race was that toping goblin Naggeneen who haunted the great wine-cellar of Mr. MacCarthy of Ballinacarth. This elf played Puck with

<sup>1</sup> *Fairy Legends*, “Seeing and Believing.”

the kegs and casks, flasks and bottles, and frightened the servants so that none dared to fetch the master's wine. The master undertook a personal investigation, and descended to the cellar, lantern in hand. There he found the offender, a mite of a creature, six inches in height, astride a pipe of his oldest port, and bearing a spigot upon his shoulder.

“Raising the lantern, Mr. MacCarthy contemplated the little fellow with wonder: he wore a red night-cap on his head; before him was a short leather apron, which now, from his attitude, fell rather on one side; and he had stockings of a light blue colour, so long as nearly to cover the entire of his leg; with shoes, having huge silver buckles in them, and with high heels (perhaps out of vanity to make him appear taller). His face was like a withered winter apple; and his nose, which was of a bright crimson colour, about the tip wore a delicate purple bloom, like that of a plum; yet his eyes twinkled

‘like those mites  
Of candied dew in moony nights’

and his mouth twitched up at one side with an arch grin.”<sup>1</sup>

One of the most weirdly beautiful of Irish superstitions is that of the Banshee, the aristo-

<sup>1</sup> *Fairy Legends*, “The Haunted Cellar.”

cratic spectre that attaches itself exclusively to ancient or noble families. A number of them appear in *The Fairy Legends*. The Banshee shows itself in the form of a female figure, with hair and white robe floating in the night wind, wailing and pouring forth songs of frantic lamentation. Its presence forebodes the death of a member of the family with which it is associated.

Another set of legends gathers about the Phookas, spirit horses or birds, which mortals are mysteriously constrained to mount, and which dash with their riders down crags and chasms, over mad torrents, and through dark midnight storms, or soar to dizzy heights amongst stars and clouds. The story of Daniel O'Rourke, an Irish Astolpho, who rides a Phooka eagle to the moon, is a completely delightful product of freakish fancy and the purest drollery.

There are legends also connected with ponds, streams, and the sea, one group telling of enchanted and happy cities or countries lying in the crystal depths of lakes, where the glass of time stands still, and no one grows old. Bands of water-sprites, too, make their appearance,

varying in aspect from the awesome thing "with green hair and long, green teeth," seen by Jack Dogherty of "The Soul Cages," to the gentle and tender sea woman, "as mild and as beautiful as the moon," the daughter of a king of the watery realms, upon whom Dick Fitzgerald puts his comeder,<sup>1</sup> and whom he persuades to be his wife.

Not the least strange of the supernatural creatures of *The Fairy Legends* are the company of headless phantoms. Phantom coaches with headless drivers, headless horses, and headless passengers spin over moonlit roads, and daredevil mortals, on their way home from late nights at the "public," meet headless huntsmen on headless nags, and ride them cross-country races by the light of the moon.

The other novelists of the gentry who write of the peasantry do not compare favorably with Croker on the score of literary merit or general interest. Mrs. Thomas Crofton Croker is now known to be the author of *Barney Mahoney* (1832), which at her desire was published under her husband's name. *Barney Mahoney* has an Irishman for a hero, an Irish peasant, who conceals under a vacant countenance and blundering

<sup>1</sup> Anglicè, "come hither."

demeanor shrewdness, quick wit, and despite a touch of rascality, real kindness of heart. The type is a familiar one in the novels, the natural product of the conditions of Irish life in the past, when the peasant, powerless under the pressure of tyranny and dependence, developed, as a kind of necessity of self-preservation, an extraordinary tact in dealing with his masters, and remarkable powers of subtlety and deceit.

Samuel Lover, who began writing a few years after the appearance of the Crokers' books, may have found suggestions for his short stories in Croker's *Fairy Legends*, and may even have had Barney Mahoney's buffooneries in mind when he wrote *Handy Andy*. Lover, in his first book, *Legends and Stories of Ireland* (1831), works the vein that Croker had opened so successfully. Lover's father was a stock-broker in Dublin, where Samuel was born in 1797. Lover was a jack-of-all-trades — musician, song writer, painter, poet, and virtuoso, as well as novelist. Naturally of a happy temperament, he carried into manhood a boy's light-heartedness and love of fun. The soul of sociability, he was never so much himself as when the centre of a merry company. He made



one of a set of droll fellows who were ever ready to cater to Dublin's taste for amusement, who found a market for their waggery, and a welcome everywhere, and who left society in their debt for a good share of entertainment. In singing a song, in anecdote, and in small talk he surpassed most of his rivals. Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, who met him in Nice, gives a correct impression of the man when he says : "In manner and bearing he was a superb Jack-  
een (Anglicè, cockney). His face comical, but not plastic or expressive. It is the face of a droll."<sup>1</sup> Indeed both cockneyism and the broad, easy drollery of the Merry Andrew were in the grain with Lover. Lover recalls Lever in his passion for sociability, his relentless pursuit of fun, his ambition to be entertaining, and his avoidance of the serious and disagreeable sides of life ; but he lacked Lever's masculine force, frank high spirit, and the *bel air* which, despite noise and swagger, he always had about him.

Lover's *Legends and Stories of Ireland* is a collection of short tales and character sketches that touch lightly, gayly, and superficially upon peasant life. Some deal with popular super-

<sup>1</sup> *My Life in Two Hemispheres*, vol. II, p. 103.



stitutions; some present Irish types, as priests, porters, carmen, and fishermen; others are illustrations of popular proverbs: and still others embody national traits in short stories — among the best in this last kind the legend of the doting old King O'Toole and St. Kevin, in which it is told how that most Irish saint, with the true national sagacity in agrarian transactions, “done the ould king out iv his property for the glory of God.”

In the hero of *Rory O'More* (1837), the first of his novels properly speaking, Lover has presented a character that combines the more amiable traits of the young Irish peasant — honesty, faithfulness, cleverness, courage, and good-humor, and Rory is perhaps the most engaging of the peasant lads of the novelists of the gentry. As the peasant lover he is a complete success, and in his courtship of the fair Kathleen there is a simple grace and homely tenderness quite idyllic. *Rory O'More* strikes the patriotic note also. The story opens just before the Rebellion of '98, and closes just after it. The personage who divides the attention with Rory is a young patriot, a gentleman of Anglo-Norman stock, who has served under

Bonaparte, and in this story is a medium of communication between General Hoche and the United Irishmen. The novel does not go deep into the plans and methods of the rebels, nor will its presentation of the negotiations with the French make it a document upon these matters. Lover, with his not too fervent patriotism, does not make his mark as a patriotic novelist.

The hero of *Handy Andy* (1842) is a raw, green, unmannered fellow from the poorest of the peasantry, Andy Rooney by name, who by virtue of an inveterate tendency to blunder is dubbed, in irony, Handy Andy. He is meant to exemplify that section of his countrymen whose thoughts are supposed to be always in a state of mixture and confusion. Those "whose lungs are tickle o' the sere" will find entertainment in this story of Andy's blunderings and buffoonery. Among other transactions of a like kind, it is recorded how the hero, assisting his master's butler at a dinner party, lost control of the soda-water bottle which he was opening, shot the cork in his master's eye, and poured the soda-water upon his mistress's back; how, when told to put a half-dozen of champagne *on ice*, he opened the bottles long before dinner,

emptied the contents into a tub of cracked ice, and, when the champagne was called for, served it tub, ice, and all ; or how, on another occasion, he crashed through the glass roof of a conservatory, carrying with him in his course an avalanche of flower-pots, and landing in the midst of the débris, embowered in the branches of crushed geraniums and hydrangeas. The story of Handy Andy concludes with the account of his wedding trip, in which, as a last misadventure, he upsets the boat, and plunges his bride, himself, and the boatman in the beautiful lakes of Killarney.

Besides the scenes of peasant life in which Andy is the central figure, this novel presents scenes from the life of the harum-scarum Irish gentry much in Lever's way. Duels, abductions, uproarious dinners, a contested election, and a series of rough practical jokes upon a lisping English dandy from Dublin Castle, who comes down to the country to show his finesse in conducting election movements, are among the incidents. Among the characters are a preposterously drunken and passionate squire of the familiar type, waging the usual defensive war against the bailiffs, and a miscellaneous

company of peasants, duellists, hedge-priests, hedge-schoolmasters, beggars, and illicit distillers.

*Treasure Trove* (1844), the last and least effective of Lover's novels, is a story of the Irish brigade.

The most painstaking and serious of the novelists of the gentry who write of the peasants is Mrs. Anna Maria Hall (1800-1881), whose work in Irish fiction was but one outlet of her zeal for moral and social edification. In Ireland she found a field ripe for her talents in these directions. In this didactic turn of mind she resembles Miss Edgeworth, though without that lady's sprightly wit. Mrs. Hall belonged to an Anglo-Irish family that had exhausted land and resources in the ways that prevailed among the Irish country gentry. She married an Englishman, and passed most of her life in England.

Of Mrs. Hall's endless productions (she wrote constantly for the magazines and annuals) the *Sketches of Irish Character* (1829), *Lights and Shadows of Irish Life* (1838), and *Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (1840), collections of short stories and sketches, are designed to point out

habits, prejudices, and pursuits that appeared to be roots of evil in the condition of the peasant, and which, though in themselves neither vicious nor injurious, lead commonly to vice or misery. These three books enter in detail into the domestic economy of the peasant — the evils of drink, laziness, and thriftlessness, those resulting from early and improvident marriages, the itch of the Irishman to be forever going to law, and the like.

*The Whiteboy* (1845), a novel, tells of the experiences in Ireland of a young Englishman, who has just fallen heir to an estate in the county of Cork. He is a hero of the priggish type dear to the heart of Miss Edgeworth. His qualifications for his duties as an Irish landlord are a love for the romance of Irish history, a love for the poetry of Thomas Moore, and experience in the management of his English estates. He comes to his Irish possessions with the most beneficent intentions. On his voyage to Ireland he sits on the deck in the moonlight and dreams himself the benefactor of the generous and long-suffering people over whom he is to rule. In his mind's eye he sees the wretched, windowless, chimneyless cabins, flanked by the

usual dung-heap and pool of green water, give place to rose-covered cottages in the English style. At one end of the smiling village the church spire rises; at the other end the cross of a chapel. Under his hospitable mahogany priest and parson are to put their legs, and pass pleasant evenings in peace and good-will. The dream is dispelled when he reaches his estate. The Whiteboys are "up," and actively engaged in punishing landlords and middlemen, and in settling private grudges. They are burning buildings, shooting their enemies from behind hedges, abducting young women, and the like. The postboy is murdered by night. The house of a bad middleman is burned, with the idea of roasting the rascally inmate alive in the flames of his own dwelling. He escapes from this fate only to be hurled into the sea and drowned. To cap the climax, this young Englishman himself is abducted by a band of Whiteboys, and is happy to escape with his life. The military and gentry ride over the country in parties, burning and shooting by way of reprisal, and occasionally engaging in bloody conflicts with bands of peasants. It is in this atmosphere of murder and sudden death, rancor



and prejudice, that the young Englishman sets about his benevolent schemes. The task of taming the savage Whiteboy, and reforming the characters, manners, and customs of the wild Irish peasant, he performs with a celerity and a measure of success more often obtained in didactic novels than in the real world. The leader of the Whiteboys in this story is an impoverished young Catholic gentleman who has inherited a hatred of the institutions that oppressed his co-religionists and ruined him and his family. His poverty has brought him, in manner of life, near to the peasantry. They look to him as their leader. Deep sympathy for their troubles and a determination to protect them against the rapacity and injustice of landlords and bad agents, have led him to put himself at the head of the Whiteboys of his district, as the only means of effecting this purpose.



## CHAPTER III

### THE NOVELISTS OF THE PEASANTRY

AT the close of the first quarter of the nineteenth century a group of young writers began to appear whose works were more national and more worthy of being considered as an elucidation of Irish life and the character of the race than those of any previous novelist, except perhaps Miss Edgeworth. This is the group of novelists of the peasantry. They were all of Celtic stock, and bred in the Catholic faith. At this time O'Connell's agitation had awakened the Irish Catholics, and there is doubtless a connection between this little outburst of literary energy and the repeal of Catholic disabilities.

There is a strong contrast between the careers of these novelists of the peasantry and the gentry novelists. Lady Morgan in her theatrical and

literary Bohemia or in Belgravia, Maxwell and his sporting life, Lever's high-living and gay company, the comfortable lives of Miss Edgeworth, the Crokers and Mrs. Hall, and Lover drolling it in the drawing-rooms of Dublin or London, make a series of pictures quite different from that of John Banim's harassed, hand-to-mouth existence, Griffin's fight for bread and fame, and the necessitous career of Carleton, struggling for education and a livelihood. With the novelists of the peasantry the devil-may-care temper that gave the novels of the gentry their characteristic tone no longer rules. They cannot take hold of life in the same free, off-hand manner.

John Banim, the first of the group, was born in 1798, the year of the Rebellion, and the same in which Croker and Carleton first saw the light, in Kilkenny, where his father—a bit of old Ireland in his testy temper, his warm heart, and his love of a social glass—was engaged in the double occupation of farmer and shopkeeper, in the latter capacity a dealer in the necessaries of a sportsman's and angler's outfit. His father was of the "strong farmer" class, that is, somewhere between the thriving peasant and the gentleman

farmer. He kept a pair of blood-horses, and in Banim's boyhood (though reverses soon came) was in easy circumstances. John's formal education began under an eccentric pedagogue, who, by a weakness for drink and other foibles, could rival the hedge-schoolmasters of Carleton's tales ; it was continued at a preparatory school at Kilkenny, and ended there with his fifteenth year. In the same year he left home for Dublin to study drawing, returning two years later to support himself in a school position as drawing-master. He shortly formed a romantic and unfortunate attachment for one of his pupils. He was not thought eligible by the young lady's father, his suit was scornfully rejected, and all communication forbidden between the lovers. Under the agitation of the separation the delicate, high-strung girl became ill and died. Banim, intensely emotional by nature, abandoned himself to the tide of grief. Exposure to bad weather at the time of the funeral and after, when he wandered for days careless and scarce conscious of his whereabouts, together with the agony of his sorrow, resulted in a collapse of body and mind from which it took months to recover ; this planted the seeds of a dis-

order that eventually brought him to his death. On his partial recovery he resolved to give up art for literature, went to Dublin, and half starved there for two years. But in spite of struggles the Dublin experiment ended prosperously. He wrote a tragedy, *Damon and Pythias*, that was accepted by Macready and put upon the stage at Covent Garden with triumphant success. This was in 1821. A visit home followed the success of the tragedy, during which he married and planned a fresh literary campaign. London was thought a better field than Dublin for his talents, and in 1822, with a few pounds in his pocket and accompanied by his young wife, he entered upon the struggle of life there without a single friend or even an introductory letter.

The illness of his wife after their arrival in London soon exhausted their slender store, and necessity drove Banim to continued literary labor beyond his strength. At this time, when circumstances called for all his health and energy, anxiety and excessive toil induced a terrible illness, a return of the racking pains that had tortured him for months after the death of his first love. From this to the end of

his life Banim fought his battle with a broken sword. He worked on with set teeth, besieged and prostrated by illness after illness. He scarce wrote three pages of his stories, he tells his brother, free from "wringing, burning, agonizing pain." The story of his life from his arrival in London to his death is a story of toil, disappointment, and disaster, with painful illness as an almost constant attendant. When only thirty-one years old, his health was so feeble that change of air and scene was declared to be his only hope. In 1829 he left London for Boulogne-sur-Mer. There he was stricken with paralysis of the lower limbs. When in 1832 cholera was epidemic in Boulogne, the paralyzed man was attacked by it, recovered, relapsed, and again fought his way back to life. This left him ever after weak and shattered in body, and for a time in mind. At last, baffled and broken, he owned himself defeated in the struggle, and wrote for help to his literary friends. And this prostration came just as fame and fortune began to smile upon him. The three series of the *O'Hara Tales* (1825, 1826, 1829), written by him and his brother Michael in collaboration, had been entirely suc-

cessful, and his novel *The Boyne Water* (1825) had been well received. But at the moment when the road for the first time seemed smooth before him, his literary work was done. The appeal to his brethren of the pen had not been in vain. Subscriptions from literary men, a benefit performance in Dublin, a purse from his fellow-citizens of Kilkenny, and other generous gifts kept him beyond want for the rest of his life. In 1835 he returned to Kilkenny to die. His brother Michael, who met him in Dublin to take him home, was shocked at the ravages that disease and wasting toil had wrought, and describes him — he was then in his thirty-seventh year — as “a meagre, attenuated, almost white-haired old man.” After seven more painful years John Banim died at Kilkenny in 1842.

Michael Banim, John's eldest brother, who has appeared in the background of this sketch, was born at Kilkenny in 1796. His education was the same as John's, except that for a time he took up the study of law, only to abandon it shortly, however, because of a reverse of fortune that befell his father. With the self-sacrifice that marked all his relations with father and brother, he devoted himself to unravelling the



tangled threads of his father's business. In 1825 he wrote, at John's suggestion, a tale for *The Tales of the O'Hara Family*. This was *Crohoore of the Bill-hook*, one of the most popular of the series, and he continued throughout his brother's literary life to publish jointly with him. After a series of ups and downs of fortune, he died, an old man of seventy-eight, in 1874.

The first of John Banim's novels, considered in their historical sequence, is *The Boyne Water*, a novel after the manner of Scott, in which the thread of a double love story is followed through numberless thrilling adventures, with the siege of Londonderry, the battle of the Boyne, and the siege of Limerick as the great features. The story opens before the outbreak of hostilities between James and William. Parties of Protestant gentry, wrathful and dismayed, dining together in Dublin, tap their swords significantly, and denounce Tyrconnel's policy that is sweeping Protestants from the army, civic offices, the bench, and the bar, and striving to substitute a Catholic for a Protestant ascendancy. Frantic parsons declaim against open mass-houses where before there was



godly silence, against tolerated priests, Papist prelates at court, and the imminence of universal Popery. All hands contemplate with well-grounded terror the spectacle of the English ascendancy for the moment abolished, the native Irish restored to their rights and ready to retaliate upon those who had trampled upon them since Cromwell's time. The love plot turns on a typical dilemma growing out of the conditions of the day, when religious and political feeling ran high, and the nation arrayed itself, Protestant against Catholic, in opposing ranks. There are twin heroes and heroines. Evelyn, a young Protestant gentleman, becomes engaged to Eva M'Donnell, a young Catholic lady. The young lady's brother, Edmund M'Donnell, engages himself to Evelyn's sister. The double marriage is being celebrated when, in the midst of the ceremony, a messenger bursts in with the announcement, "William the Deliverer has landed." In the excitement of the moment the ceremony is suspended; the parsons and priests, who were officiating together at the mixed wedding, break out in fierce recriminations; the parties to the wedding are drawn into the angry altercation. The Protes-

tant sister leaves the Catholic lover's arms for the protection of her brother, and in like manner the Catholic sister takes her place by her brother's side. M'Donnell hastens to join James's army; the Protestant brother and sister make the best of their way to Londonderry, the Protestant refuge in the north. This flight gives occasion for a picture of the country at this critical moment. The roads are astir with Protestants, gentle and simple, hastening to the northern towns where the Williamites were to stand at bay, and passing these are parties of Catholics hurrying in an opposite direction.

The interest in the book as a love story soon fades away, and attention is centred upon battles and sieges and the historical personages that appear upon the stage. The whole story of the long siege of Derry is told from the time King James and his army sat down before the closed gates to the day the English ship broke the boom across the river, and the besiegers were forced sullenly to withdraw. The horrors of the siege are not spared. The Protestants are even reduced to feed upon carrion, and die in the streets of hunger and the fever that

comes of it. The Rev. George Walker, the soul of the fighting men of the city, is always well to the front. Clad in his clericals, armed, and with a military sash, he now leads a sally from the walls, now prays for victory in the churches.

The battle scenes at the Boyne are designed to be the feature of the book. All through them there are interesting glimpses of the oddly sorted companions in arms that made up the army of James—the ragged, wild Irish regiments, in motley uniforms, bare-legged, and armed with rusty pikes and firelocks, in strange contrast to the bright chivalry of their French allies. The careful descriptions of the battleground are the result of a tour made by Banim especially to familiarize himself with its topography. The figure of William on his white horse, stern, silent, and in person commanding and inspiring his troops, is contrasted with that of the incapable James, in the churchyard on Dunore hill, lending a willing ear to the French officer who counsels flight for France, while Sarsfeld vainly urges his majesty to head in person a last charge, and strike with his own arm for his triple crown.

The chief incidents of *The Last Baron of Crana* (1826) fall in the years just following the events of *The Boyne Water*. The novel is both an illustration of the working of the penal laws upon the Catholics within their jurisdiction and a picture of the life of a class of Catholics who lived in open defiance of them. With the first chapter the story plunges into the midst of the battle of Aughrim. Sir Redmund O'Burke, an officer in James's army, is prompted by a soldier's admiration of courage to save the life of Captain Pendergast of William's army from the swords of James's troopers. The tide of the battle then sweeps the two apart, to meet again as William's army wins the day. Sir Redmund lies mortally wounded, and with his last breath asks Pendergast to protect his young son who has survived the battle. In obedience to the dying request, Pendergast finds O'Burke's son, and takes him to his home in the north. With the youth go a priest, his tutor, and a faithful Catholic retainer. *En route* to the north they stop in Dublin. As in *The Boyne Water*, so here the political temper of the time is reflected in the sentiments voiced at gatherings of Protestant gentlemen where Pendergast is a guest.

He, with three Catholics now dependent on him for protection, listens eagerly to hear the feeling of the victors regarding the fate of the Catholics. Every voice is raised against the treaty of Limerick as a measure of unmerited leniency toward the vanquished and of ungrateful injustice to the supporters of King William.

In due time, the persecuting laws are passed against the Catholics, and Pendergast must either keep O'Burke uneducated and forbid him the ministrations of his church, or break the law of the land that made education for a Catholic illegal and forbade a Catholic priest to exercise his functions. He chooses the latter course, and breaks the laws for his young friend's sake. O'Burke is daily tutored by the priest, and in a hut a little removed from the house the mass is regularly celebrated. Moved by a private spite an enemy, who knows of these proceedings, swears out a warrant against O'Burke, the priest, and the faithful retainer of O'Burke, who is a Catholic, and whom Pendergast has made his gamekeeper, and also against some Catholic gentlemen who happen at the time to be Pendergast's guests. The

officer of the law visits the house, and orders the household before him. First laying down five pounds, he demands O'Burke's sleek hunter, for by law a Protestant could always claim the horses of a Catholic by paying five pounds a head, and on the same basis takes the handsome coach-horses of Pendergast's guests. He then demands the discharge of Pendergast's gamekeeper, who, as a Catholic, illegally held the position. All the Catholics are then fined in accordance with another statute which provided that all good men must attend Sabbath services of the Established Church once a week, on penalty of a fine for each absence. The suspects are asked how often they have attended public worship in a church of the established form. All answer, "Never." Accordingly the fine is reckoned from the time of the passing of the statute six years back up to date. The bailiff pays his respects last to the priest. When the latter finds himself discovered, knowing death to be the penalty of exercising his office, he fells the bailiff with a swinging blow, dashes through the window, and escapes.

Such is the illustration in this fiction of the penal laws at work upon those within their



jurisdiction. The career of the last Baron of Crana, the personage who gives the book its name, represents the career of many Catholics, some of the better sort, who defied the laws and warred against them.

At the close of the civil war, the young Baron of Crana knows that his estates will be confiscated, on the ground of his having held a commission in James's army. In reckless defiance of a condition of things in which he and his Catholic brethren are so outrageously treated he joins a band of Rapparees, and becomes their leader. The Rapparees, so called from their carrying raparies or half-pikes, were wild bands of plunderers, originally recruited from the Catholics who had fought for King James, and who, after the termination of hostilities, continued to exist as freebooters and gentlemen of the road. To them it was a virtue to break the laws, and rob and plunder the officers of a usurping king, the persecutor of them and their faith. It was their delight to rob the rich Sassenachs, and to empty the money-bags of tithe-proctors and tax gatherers as they returned from their rounds laden with King William's dues. The Rapparees, generally speaking recruited from the lower



ranks of society, had also a scattering of ruined Catholic gentlemen — some even of the Baron of Crana's pretensions — who took refuge among them, preferring, for one reason or another, the life of outlaws at home to military service in the armies of France or Spain. The leaders of these bands sometimes rivalled Robin Hood in daring, courage, and generosity, and, like him, were the darlings of the poor, whom they disdained to molest. It was as a leader of these bands that the last Baron of Crana, ruined by his devotion to the cause of James, unsettled by the wars, without home or occupation, wound up his career.

In *The Conformists* (1829) Banim again illustrates the practical working of the penal laws. Hugh Darcy, a Catholic country gentleman, is confronted with the problem of educating his two sons in the face of the laws against Catholic education. Tutors fear prosecution, and will not risk teaching the boys, so Mr. Darcy resolves to make a shift to teach them himself. But he loves his ease, soon tires of racking his brains over rusty Latin and forgotten mathematics, and relinquishes the effort, to spend the evenings more comfortably over the bottle. Making

the care of the estate his excuse, he leaves the education of the boys in their mother's hands. A Catholic neighbor, who can find no one to teach his daughters, begs Mrs. Darcy, as a special kindness, to allow them to share with the boys the advantages of her instruction. The request granted, two bright young ladies become the fellow-students of her sons, and this situation leads to a collision with the penal laws.

Dan, the younger son, clever with rod and gun but a dunce at his books, is ashamed to display his backwardness before the young ladies, and to make up for lost time betakes himself surreptitiously to a hedge-schoolmaster who, hounded out of his profession by the penal laws, earned his bread as a laborer upon a neighboring farm. This man, overcoming his fears, consents to help Dan out, and, in a lonely spot, screened by a hedge, they daily toil with book and slate. But the plan ends in disaster. The officers of the law get wind of the illegal education, and one fine day a bailiff bursts rudely upon the studious seclusion of the pair. The hedge-schoolmaster gives leg-bail and escapes, but young Dan is dragged off to jail to expiate his crime.

The incident that concludes this story shows the operation of one of the most outrageous and intolerable provisions of the code — that which makes the son of a Catholic who conforms the legal heir to his father's estate. On the son's turning Protestant, not only does he become legal heir, but the father is not allowed, from the moment the son reads his recantation, to sell or mortgage any part of his property. Here the law is brought into operation in this way. Dan has become engaged. An ingenious conspiracy of his enemies forces him to believe that father and mother, brother and mistress have combined against him in an unnatural plot involving the breaking of his engagement and the marriage of his brother to his lady. Dan determines to take his revenge with a weapon as cruel and unnatural as those his family are turning, he believes, against himself. The penal law above referred to is ready to his hand. He resolves to turn Protestant, and thus revenge himself at once upon father, brother, and mistress, by securing the whole patrimony to himself. The story is no less successful as an illustration of the working of the penal law from the fact that Dan finds he has wronged

his family in suspecting them, becomes reconciled to them, and marries the lady of his choice.

The Irish novels are one more witness to the purity of the Catholic priesthood in Ireland. The priest unfaithful to his vows is a figure almost unknown to them. *The Nowlans* (1826) is the only one of these stories in which the breaking of a priest's vows for the love of a woman is the central situation.

John Nowlan, the hero of *The Nowlans*, is a handsome, intelligent young peasant, with all the peasant's dower of impulse and passion. Set apart for the priesthood, he has completed his education in the three R's, some Greek and Latin, and plenty of theology. Mr. Long, a wealthy country gentleman, taking a fancy to young Nowlan, domesticates him in the "big house," where he becomes tutor in the classics to Miss Letty Adams, Mr. Long's pretty niece.

The expected happens; the ardent young peasant finds himself inextricably in love with the inexperienced girl who returns his passion. The young man vainly tries to tear himself away from temptation. His resistance is weakened by doubts concerning the faith and practice of his own church. Protestants, seeking to con-

vert him, bring batteries of arguments to bear against his creed. They assail, too, and with special effect at this critical moment, the Roman rule of celibacy as unnatural, and praise marriage as the grand condition of virtuous happiness. The Established Church clergyman, whom Nowlan has come to know, a young man just married and living in blameless happiness with his lovely wife, is to Nowlan the tempting image of a bliss within his own reach if he will but yield to argument. In the ferment of such thoughts and temptations, he and Letty, forgetting all that opposes their love, give themselves up to it completely. Nowlan's vows are broken, and the young pair flee to Dublin to live a life of poverty and struggle until Letty's death in child-bed. At last Nowlan, chastened by repentance, returns to follow the profession which sin and misfortune had interrupted. Thus the only one of these novels that has for its main situation the temptation and sin of a priest, ends in repentance, and a reconciliation between the erring priest and his church.

In *The Peep o' Day, or John Doe* (1825) John Banim has written a story of one of the secret societies — the Shanavests, so called from the

part of dress by which the members chose to be distinguished. Their object is here the lowering of rack-rents and tithes. By anonymous letters they proscribe rents and tithe-rates, and where their demands are disregarded inflict summary and dire punishment. They attend to other matters also. In one instance a Shanavest letter commands a Catholic lawyer to plead gratis for all defenders in the tithe-procutor's court; in another the priest finds a Shanavest notice nailed to his door demanding the reduction of Christmas and Easter dues, the reduction of marriage fees to two shillings per pair, and of christening fees to ten pence per head.

The leader of the Shanavests of this tale is the son of a once prosperous farmer. His father was ruined and his sister robbed of her good name by a villanous middleman. To revenge his father and sister he joins the illegal association of which he eventually becomes the leader, bringing his vengeance to a full accomplishment at the story's end, by having the middleman shot and his body tossed into the flames of his own house, which the Shanavests had fired.



Michael Banim's *Crohoore of the Bill-Hook* (1825) is also a story of the secret societies. The Whiteboys are "up." A black-hearted tithe-proctor has aroused their ire and receives a midnight visit. He is dragged from his bed, and buried alive up to the neck. One of the band with a pruning knife in his hand then steps up and after an address delivered in a tone of savage mockery slices the ears from the victim's head. The victim is then made to swear, on the book, that he will abandon forever his unpopular profession. This done, the troop, with a wild "hurrah" that testifies their triumph, withdraw.

The action of *Crohoore* is placed in the period when the peasants labored under the cruel code, then almost in full operation. While deprecating the violence of the Whiteboys, the story aims to make clear the grievances from which the Whiteboy movement arose, and to disabuse Englishmen of the idea that the Whiteboy disturbances were groundless outbreaks of savagery and malice. The peasantry are presented in their poverty and ignorance, neglected, galled, and hard-driven by middlemen and tithe-proctors who squeezed the very marrow from their bones. Under maddening hardships it is seen



how natural, almost inevitable, it was that they should blindly seek redress and wreak vengeance in the only way open to them.

In *The Croppy* (1828), by Michael Banim, the scene is the County Wexford; the time, the eve of and during the Rebellion of '98. The novel is a love story moving through a series of historic and semi-historic incidents representing the life men lived in those days of suspense and danger. The novel takes its title from a word applied to the rebels by their enemies as a term of contempt. The rebels affected a fashion of close-cut polls in imitation of the French Republicans. This way of wearing the hair was considered a badge of disaffection, and the crop-head rebel was dubbed the "croppy." *The Croppy* introduces the two parties who were to be antagonists in the impending struggle — the Catholic peasantry, mostly identified with the United Irishmen, the society planning the Rebellion which was to free Ireland from English rule, and the Orangemen, the loyalists and conspiracy hunters, bent on preventing an outbreak or suppressing one if it should occur.

The meetings of the United Irishmen of the early part of the story reflect the attitude of

the peasantry of the south toward the Rebellion. An emissary of the United Irishmen comes down from the north to see how matters stand in the County Wexford on the eve of the rising. In a smithy he meets a parochial committee of the society — decent men, snug farmers and small tradesmen they seem — to canvass the situation. He asks if, in their operations, they have proceeded in the spirit of the oath of membership by which they swore to make the society a brotherhood of Irishmen of every religious persuasion. The frank replies told the familiar tale, that generous patriots groaned to hear, of a great movement inspired by the ideal of a happy freedom for a United Ireland, gone wrong, and sunk to the level of a bitter sectarian struggle rooted in old hate, fear, and religious bigotry.

*The Croppy* gives a sample, too, of the outrages of the Orange yeomanry that marked the attempts to quell the growing disaffection. These deeds convinced the Catholics that the Orangemen were conspiring to exterminate them, and precipitated the Rebellion. This is the kind of thing that was happening all over the country. A United Irishman blacksmith

had been making pikes for the use of the rebels, and the pike-heads were concealed beneath the anvil in the shop. Some informer revealed the fact to the yeomanry. The man's son rushes into the smithy with the news that the yeomanry are at his heels to search for concealed weapons. Messengers at once post off to warn neighbors similarly involved. The smith, as the guilty man, hastens from the shop to conceal himself, thinking his wife and children will be unharmed. The yeomanry clatter up to the door; find the bird flown; seize the son and some of the neighbors who are suspected; burn the smithy, and try to turn their captives into informers by torture. Some are fastened to trees and flogged within an inch of their lives. The smith's son is strung up to the limb of a tree and lowered, to try if they can wring from the convulsed lips and bewildered senses of the boy confessions regarding the conspiracy and the hiding-place of his father. The boy, still keeping silence, is again strung up, and again lowered to gasp out a false story, that can do his friends no harm, and may do good, to the effect that the Catholics were about to sweep down on the Orangemen ten thousand strong.

This assertion fell in with the belief held by the Orangemen (corresponding to the Catholic fear of them) that their enemies were planning a massacre. Hence operations stop at once; the lad is left to expire in the arms of his parents; there is a rush for the horses, and the Orange cavalry gallop to quarters to prepare for the descent of the ten thousand.

The difficulties of the country gentry who sought to remain neutral during the Rebellion are illustrated in the dilemma of the Sir Thomas Hartley of the story. He is one of those whose sympathies had gone with the United Irishmen up to the time their proceedings changed from open remonstrance to secret conspiracy; but he shrank from rebellion, and refused to wade through blood to freedom. He detested the bigotry of the Orangemen, however, and actively opposed their pitch-cappings, scourgings, half-hangings and whole-hangings of peasants on the mere suspicion of rebellion. As a result of his conduct the Orangemen marked him for an enemy and a traitor, and the rebellious peasantry believed they had in him a secret champion of their conspiracy. Of one side of this understanding he is made well aware at the

very outbreak of the Rebellion, when, sitting at home, he is startled one day by a tremendous shout, like the clamor of a thousand throats. Looking from his window he sees, swarming on his lawn, a motley multitude composed of the Catholic peasantry of the whole neighborhood, armed with rusty guns, bludgeons, scythes, and formidable pikes. The peasantry are "up" and the Rebellion has begun. A spokesman steps before the mob and informs Sir Thomas that he, the "barrow-knight," has been chosen to take command of the troops of the Union drawn up before him, and that they are ready to follow him to the world's end. On his declining the honor, and declaring he will have no hand in the Rebellion, the threatening shouts of the wild crowd bear in upon him the perils of the trimmer's position:—

"What's the rason you have for skulkin' back, Sir Thomas?"

"You're afeared, Sir Thomas, an' the curse o' Cromwell on all cowards. But ar'n't you afeared iv *us*? Ar'n't you afeared we'd drag you down from that windee, an' make you march wid us, or die by us?"

"Oncet more, an' for the last time, Sir Thomas, will you be one among us or an inemy agin us?"

"Smash the duour!"

Sir Thomas, by good fortune, is able to escape rebel violence, but only to be caught on the other horn of the dilemma. The Orangemen, regarding his inactivity as disloyalty, pack the jury, try him, and condemn him to death as a traitor.

The scenes from the heart of the Rebellion make a vivid picture of the state of the County Wexford—the roads astir with the rebels in disorderly mobs, burning houses and piking the enemies they could lay hands on, while the Orangemen retaliated by bayoneting or shooting every timid straggler in a peasant's coat who had not turned out with the main body. The rebel army, officers and men, becomes familiarly known. The scene upon the hill of Ballyorvil, where the rebels are preparing for the attack on Enniscorthy, is curious to the last degree in the glimpses given of the grotesque appearance and doings of the "throops of the Union." In the front of this body were collected all who bore firearms, some few shouldering muskets, and the rest clutching guns of every kind and calibre, plundered from the villages they passed through on their way, wrested from parties of defeated Orangemen, or dragged from places of



concealment to grace the long-expected day. Ammunition was scarce, and carried for the most part in bits of paper thrust inaccessibly into the depths of their pockets. Behind the "gunsmen" rose groves of long pikes roughly fashioned from the anvil, rude, black weapons, but serviceable, and fit instruments in this civil strife where the pomp and circumstance of war found no place. This army was clad as strangely as it was armed. Uniforms there were none. Some had pouches or cross-belts wrested from the soldiers, but most were dressed in their usual costumes, except that many doffed coats, stockings, and brogues to go into action in the broiling summer weather as cool and light as possible. The leaders, mostly farmers and small tradesmen, with a few priests, among them the burly figure of the Father Rourke of history, later hung upon Wexford bridge, were out in front of their commands. They were clad like the rank and file, except perhaps for a green hatband or some badge of green fastened upon them. These officers, with difficulty raising their tones of command above the general clamor, in which the shrill cries of women and children who had accompanied the men bore no incon-



siderable part, were busied in pushing, pulling, coaxing, and cursing their unruly throngs into some sort of disposition for march and battle.

From the hill of Ballyorvil the story follows the rebel forces as they sweep pell-mell, with undisciplined courage into Enniscorthy; to their camp on Vinegar Hill, with particular attention to the slaughter *ad libitum* of cattle to appease their hunger, and Orangemen to satisfy their revenge; thence to Wexford, and to the capture of Ross, and the retreat therefrom, with which the novel as a story of the Rebellion concludes.

The preoccupation of the Banims with the past and present fortunes of their co-religionists, and their strong Catholic sympathies, are written all over their work, which is largely concerned with the pressure of the penal laws upon the Catholics, with the lives and ministrations of the priests of their church, and in general with the Catholic peasantry. Gerald Griffin, a friend of Banim's, who brought out a collection of Irish stories shortly after the publication of the second series of *O'Hara* tales, was, like Banim, a Catholic, wrote with strong

Catholic sympathies, and kept before his eyes a declared purpose of faithfully presenting in his stories his Catholic countrymen and their religion. A Catholic spirit, if not always apparent upon the surface of his work, still breathes through it all.

Griffin came of a middle-class Catholic family. His father was a brewer in the city of Limerick, where Gerald was born in 1803. In 1810 the family left Limerick to reside in the country, at first at Fairy Lawn (near Loughill on the Shannon), then at Adare, and later at Pallas Kenry. Like Carleton and the Banims he received an imperfect education, intrusted to the care of whatever tutors or masters happened to be at hand, among them a preceptor who maintained in his methods some of the oddities of the hedge-school "philomaths." Memories of this man and of the school he kept in the little thatched Catholic chapel are preserved in the schoolroom scene of Griffin's *The Rivals* (1830). Gerald's boyhood and youth seem a record of almost unbroken happiness. He spent his time in hunting, or in boating and fishing upon the Shannon, or in rambles about the country. His taste for the romantic past de-

lighted in the antiquarian remains in which the neighborhood was rich. The noble assemblage of ecclesiastical ruins within the demesne of the Earl of Dunraven, which adjoined the town of Adare, especially appealed to his reverent and pious nature, and doubtless helped to strengthen that interest in his country's past which eventually found expression in his historical novel *The Invasion* (1832). The scenes and experiences of this happy boyhood and youth were the stuff of which his prose and poetry were made. In those days he gleaned from the remote and quiet neighborhoods in which he lived, or which he visited, their legends, traditions, and folk-tales, and came by the knowledge of peasant life and character which he afterward worked into his fiction.

With his twentieth year this life of happy pastimes and pastoral calm, so gracefully reflected in many wistful retrospects of his poetry, came to an end. A love for literature, which had been his from childhood, developed into an overwhelming passion for literary fame, and in 1823, extravagantly hopeful of quick success, he left home for London to live by his pen in the city wilderness. A letter to his

parents, written after two years of life in London, tells of his early plans:—

“I cannot with my present experience conceive anything more comical than my own views and measures at the time. A young gentleman totally unknown, even to a single family in London, coming into town with a few pounds in one pocket and a brace of tragedies in another, supposing that one will set him up before the others are exhausted, is not a very novel, but a very laughable delusion.”

A cherished ambition of succeeding by his own unaided efforts, an extreme sensitiveness that made him unwilling to put himself under obligations to those upon whom he felt he had no claim, threw him back upon his own resources and made it difficult for the one friend of earlier days whom he found in London, Banim, or for chance friends or acquaintances, no matter how kindly intentioned, to render him any assistance.

Disappointment and delay, of course, attended his efforts to get his plays upon the stage. His purse empty, reduced to desperate straits, he turned to hack work of any and every kind. In spite of wasting and continuous labor he could scarce keep soul and body together. He lived

in wretched lodgings in poverty as extreme as ever a Grub Street penny-a-liner survived, going sometimes for days without food, and toiling all the while at a pace beyond human nature to endure. Pride forbade him to own himself vanquished. "That horrid word 'failure,'" he wrote to his brother; "no, death first." And this was no vain boast, for at times the grim alternative to which he alludes was not far from its accomplishment.

The story of his first two years is distressing and painful to read. But after that prospects brightened. He obtained by slow degrees a footing as a magazine writer. In 1827 he made a decided hit with *Holland Tide* (1826), a series of tales of Irish life that completely established his character with the periodicals, and seemed to promise much for the future. Early in 1827 he returned to live with his brother at Pallas Kenry, where he wrote *Tales of the Munster Festivals* (1827), which more than sustained the reputation made by *Holland Tide*. *The Collegians* (1829) crowned his two preceding successes. To Griffin, however, the game had not been worth the candle. He had, to use his own phrase, "won half a name," but at the ex-

pense of a constitution sapped and shattered by severe trials and wasting toil.

The rest of the story may be briefly told. He lived mostly at home in Pallas Kenry with his brothers, for a time continuing his literary work. Always of a religious nature, religion gradually filled more and more of his feeling and thought, and he resolved to take up a religious vocation. In 1838 he joined the Christian Brothers, a Roman Catholic lay order who gave themselves to the education of the children of the poor. With them he lived and worked until his death of a fever in 1840.

In his survey of Irish life, Griffin attends to the life of the peasantry and to the life of his own order—the rural middle class; the gentry are occasionally introduced; the nobility are scarcely heard of.

Three of the *Tales of the Munster Festivals*, “Card-Drawing,” “The Hand and the Word,” and “The Aylmers of Bally-Aylmer,” deal with life on the southwest coast of Ireland. In the first two of these the fisher-folk appear. They are seen occupied as was their daily wont—they talk Irish, hunt seals, go to sea in canoes to fish, laze the turf-boats, till their gardens, eat pota-



toes and oaten bread, exercise themselves in offices of kindness toward strangers, and obey their priests in all reasonable matters. They are seen also, under the spur of dark passion, acting out, now and again, the tragedies that broke upon the peaceful regularity of their lives. The tales of the fisher-folk gain wonderfully in effect from the romantic setting of giddy precipice and perilous sea before which the little dramas are enacted. Griffin knew this coast well, felt its wild charm, and makes the reader feel it. The outlook of these stories is upon the stupendous cliffs and crags for which the coast is famous, upon vistas of bizarre and fantastic grandeur—insular columns and pinnacles, amphitheatres, and arches, deep caverns, and grottos worn from the solid rock, and, girdling all, the broad Atlantic tossing its bright green waves against the rocky walls, or heaving sullenly at their feet. The scenes from this wild coast are introduced not merely for their picturesqueness, but are used to bring together in a single impression the fearful in landscape and the dangerous and desperate in human passion, so that moral and physical gulfs and precipices combine to produce situations of poignant ter-

ror. The scene in "The Hand and the Word," in which Pennie's happy lover, struggling for his life with a jealous rival, is hurled from a beetling crag into the sea hundreds of feet below, is an instance of this. A situation in "Card-Drawing" is another instance. Kinchela, tortured by the guilt of a murder, the responsibility for which he has fastened upon his rival, is being lowered by a rope from the cliff-top. Suspended in mid-air between the cliff-top and the sea, he hears a strand of the rope snap just above him and beyond his reach. In an agony of terror he holds the incident for the threat of an angry God against his murderous and unrepentant soul.

In "The Aylmers of Bally-Aylmer" the gentry of the coast of Kerry are in the foreground. The story is laid in the eighteenth century. The country about the home of the Aylmers is a wild district of mountain and bog, doomed by nature to poverty, far removed from any considerable centre of civilization, and traversed by few regular roads. The state of society in this section, to judge from the story, was much like that which subsisted in the Highlands of Scotland in the early part of the eighteenth

century. Smuggling was the lucrative trade, and practised by all classes, gentlemen and peasants, Catholics and Protestants alike. To be known to meddle in the "running trade" brought no opprobrium upon the character of a gentleman. In the deep natural harbors among the mountains privateers found their shelter. All classes united in a conspiracy to baffle the officers of the revenue, and informers found themselves in such danger that their trade was almost abandoned. Gentlemen brought in oceans of Burgundy and brandy, never destined to pass through the hands of an exciseman, which they got in exchange for sheepskins and other commodities.

Griffin alone of the novelists touches upon one odd and incongruous element of Irish life — that of the Palatines, or "Palentins," as the peasantry called them. They were German emigrants brought over by a few great landlords assisted by a grant from the Irish Parliament. This was early in the eighteenth century, when English commercial legislation adverse to Irish interests had resulted in poverty, famine, and an almost total depopulation of districts in the south and west. With the hope of reviving

agriculture at a time when the penal laws were driving native energy to the continent, these Palatines were brought over. They were a part of the tide of German emigration that set toward the American colonies at the same period. The "Limerick Dutchman" and the "Pennsylvania Dutch" are of one stock. As they appear in Griffin's story of "Suil Dhuv, or The Coiner" they are peaceful and inoffensive in their habits; in religion Protestants, adhering to one or another non-Conformist type of worship; and possessed of the thrift and industry which those who brought them over thought might be edifying to the shiftless and go-easy ways of the Catholic peasantry.

"Suil Dhuv, or the Coiner" acquaints the reader with the footing upon which these foreigners stood with the native peasantry among whom they had dropped, as it were from the clouds. A difference in religion, habits, and disposition, and the partiality shown by the lords of the soil to their new protégés in granting them long leases and other favors, are seen to result in a deep-rooted hatred between Palatine and native. The natives, generous and open-handed to a fault, had an inexpressible contempt for the

unremitting exertion in acquiring and the caution in distributing money of these foreign interlopers whose "heart was in a trifle," and whose cold-blooded prudence never gave the rein to genial or convivial impulse. They hated also their dry Puritanical exactness in religious matters, and, indeed, had little in common with them beyond the religious bigotry and national prejudice that moved each to return heartily the evil feelings of the other.

In the fat Palatine parson of the story, some of the traits that aroused the contemptuous aversion of the Catholic peasantry crop out. When he speaks, it is in a strong German accent, strangely mingled with the broad drawling patois of the natives, and in a dry formal phraseology of religious cant. He has the true Evangelical appetite and solicitude as to the quantity and quality of his food and drink, which Thackeray and other satirists of the brethren have made the target of their shafts. And his portrait includes also greed for gold as a feature, a weakness comically illustrated by the purchase of a brass ingot believed by him to be pure gold. He obtained it by imposing, as he thought, upon what he mistook for the

extreme simplicity of the peasant who offered it to him. The peasant turned out to be a clever rascal, whose plausible story and simple countenance enabled him to palm off his wares on unsuspecting strangers.

In "The Half Sir," "The Barber of Bantry," "Tracy's Ambition," and *The Collegians*, middle-class life has a prominent place. In "The Half Sir" it is the hero's social position as one of this class that gives the story its coloring, and the plot its direction. This hero is a young man of low origin who has inherited a fortune. This fortune and his education have raised a barrier between him and the class to which he belonged. His sympathies lead him to seek the society of rank and position. Here he finds himself snubbed right and left. His misery over the slights and cold shoulders to which he has exposed himself are surrounded with an atmosphere of tragic gloom quite out of keeping with the weakness of the situation. Weary of slights and snubs, the hero abjures high society, and settles down as a misanthropic member of the middle class. As such he has his differences from the nobility and gentry. Sporting tastes are wanting; he can stay away



from hunts, horse-races, or cock-fights without compunction. Sociable and convivial tastes are also undeveloped; he never gives dinners, dances, or parties, and shows no zeal to make himself and his friends drunk at every opportunity. His benefactions do not stream from the heart in the bursts of impulsive generosity that delight both the giver and the humble recipient of bounty. The poor man can scarcely be grateful to so cold and phlegmatic a benefactor.

The "half quality" of whom this hero is a type were not in high favor with the peasantry. A peasant of this tale has referred contemptuously to the hero as a "half sir," and is asked what he means by the expression. He makes himself clear. The "half sir," he says, is —

"A sort of small gentleman, that way: the singlings<sup>1</sup> of a gentleman, as it were. A made man — not a born gentleman. Not great, all out, nor poor, that way entirely. Betuxt and betune, as you may say. Neither good pot-ale, nor yet strong whiskey. Neither beef nor vale. . . . A man that wouldn't go to a hunt, nor a race-course, nor a cock-fight, nor a hurlen-

<sup>1</sup> "Singlings" are the first runnings of spirits in the process of distillation.

match, nor a dance, nor a fencen-bout, nor any one born thing. Sure that's no gentleman! A man that gives no parties nor was ever known yet to be drunk in his own house. O poh! — A man that was never seen to put his hand in his pocket of a frosty mornen and say to a poor man, 'Hoy, hoy! my good fellow, here's a tin-penny for you, and get a drap o' something warm and comfortable agen the day.' A man that was never by any mains *overtaken in liquor* himself, nor the cause of anybody else being so, either. Sure such a man as that has no heart!"

Mr. Edmund Moynahan and his family in *The Barber of Bantry* are distinctly middle class, though eventually Moynahan forfeits his standing. Unhappily drawn into the bacchanalian whirl of the gentry, he loses his habitual sobriety, and becomes a "sitter-up-o'-nights" and bottle companion to his genteel, bibulous neighbors, drowning integrity and respectability in claret and whiskey punch. But before his fall he was an exemplary member of his class. He rose and retired early. The dawn saw him watching his laborers in the field or on the road, and till sunset he was occupied in business, or in advising and assisting his tenants. His wife was a stirring, competent woman. She knew *Buchanan's Domestic Medicine* from cover

to cover ; superintended the dairy or the flax-dressers at work in the barn ; knit stockings, and nursed the sick tenantry. Dancing, riding, flirting, dinner-giving, and the like she left to the gentry. In the Moynahan establishment, economy and industry went hand in hand. Nor were the Moynahans without their pleasures. In the evening there was reading aloud, while Mr. Moynahan dozed ; Mrs. Moynahan knit or played with the children ; and occasionally there came a chance visitor to be entertained with temperate cheer. They were pious people, too ; they fasted on fast days and 'kept holy days holy ; they were edified by the unadorned exhortation of the parish priest ; in short, they lived at peace with themselves, the world, and heaven.

Mr. Moynahan was no convivialist ; he prided himself upon the *wholesomeness* of his fare, and frowned upon the wild and extravagant follies of the gentry, eschewing the luxury and profusion he could not afford. The duelling habits of the gentry were to him bloodthirsty and barbarous. Horse-races, hunts, and cock-fights were not his passions. Like the "half sir," he was neither sporting man nor convivialist.

Mr. Moynahan was tax-collector for his district, and in this vocation also failed to conform naturally to the standards of the gentry. When he began to assess taxes, he shocked his genteel acquaintances by a very ungenteel disposition to do so in proportion to real values and according to law. The code of the gentry expected a tax-collector to make his own fortune as fast as possible, and to let his friends off easily. Moynahan seemed indisposed to follow the customary procedure; he showed a very ungenteel squeamishness in cheating the King's exchequer for his own good and the good of his friends. On his visits to them in a professional capacity he was surprised at receiving assurances that they had no windows, no hearths, no carriages, horses, nor cows; in a word, that the wealth they were wont on all other occasions to display with pride had suddenly and mysteriously dwindled to nothing. If he shook his head and suggested the propriety of a personal inspection, he was answered by a polite reminder that to do so would be a reflection upon their veracity. He was then invited to dine and spend the night with them, and loaded with attentions. A company of taxable gentlemen

were there to meet him. The conversation did not fail to bring out the course of his predecessors in office; they had pursued a certain line of conduct; he surely would not make himself singular. Each member of the company had some little thing he might want. One was anxious to supply his cellar, another his table, a hundred his pantry. All hands looked forward to his visit, and assured him that every house in the country had a convivial board, a comfortable chamber, and a blazing fire for the tax-gatherer. Of course, so much kindness and generosity overcame the ungenteel scruples of the good-natured man; the least the tax-collector could do for his friends was to write down fifty, or less, where a hundred should stand. The middle-class conscience at last conformed to the standard of the gentry.

The Daly family in *The Collegians* have many traits in common with the middle-class people just referred to. There is the same homeliness, the same happy, if somewhat insipid, domesticity. They have the tendency, present also in the others, to moralize every incident that comes within reach. And they share also

with the others the pietistic sentiment (very different from the heart-felt religion of the peasantry) that does duty as a sanction for the little prudences and decorums demanded by their circumstances and position.

The middle class, as Griffin portrays it, differs from the nobility and gentry in the lack of the dash and go, the frankness and high spirit, the sporting and convivial tastes, the recklessness, and wild wit and gayety. It wants also the primitive force, the depth, the fervor, the homely but subtle and searching humor of peasant life. It is more sober and subdued in tone and temper, more decorous. It is prudent, takes thought for the morrow, is domestic, moral, conscientious, and pious, with conventionality, tameness, timidity, and insipidity for its unpleasant features.

William Carleton, the last and greatest of this group, and the greatest of these Irish novelists, was born in Prillisk, County Tyrone, in 1798. His father was a peasant tenant, and William passed his youth among scenes precisely similar to those he describes in his stories. Both father and mother were peasants of the finest type. They seem to have



summed up in themselves the best traits, the accomplishments, and the knowledge of their class, and to have possessed in a high degree the domestic virtues which are the glory of the humbler Irish. Of his parents Carleton says:—

“My father indeed was a very humble man, but on account of his unaffected piety and stainless integrity of principle, he was held in high esteem by all who knew him, no matter of what rank they might be. . . . My father possessed a memory not merely great or surprising, but absolutely astonishing. As a narrator of old tales, legends, and historical anecdotes he was unrivalled, and his stock of them inexhaustible. He spoke the Irish and the English languages with equal fluency. With all kinds of charms, old ranns, or poems, old prophecies, religious superstitions, tales of pilgrims, miracles and pilgrimages, anecdotes of blessed priests and friars, revelations from ghosts and fairies, he was thoroughly well acquainted. I have never heard since, during a tolerably large intercourse with Irish society, both educated and uneducated — with the antiquary, the scholar, or the humble *senachie* — any single legend, tradition, or usage, that, so far as I can recollect, was perfectly new to me, or unheard before in some similar or cognate guise.

“My mother possessed the sweetest and most exquisite of human voices. In her early life, I had often been told, by those who had heard

her sing, that any previous intimation of her attendance at a dance, wake, or other festive occasion, was sure to attract crowds of persons, many from a distance of several miles, in order to hear from her lips the touching old airs of the country. No sooner was it known that she would attend any such meeting, than the news of it spread through the neighborhood like wild-fire, and the people flocked from all parts to hear her, just as the fashionable world does now, when the name of some eminent songstress is announced in the papers — with this difference, that upon such occasions, the voice of the one falls only on the cultivated *ear*, whilst that of the latter falls deep upon the untutored heart. She was not so well acquainted with the English tongue as my father, although she spoke it with sufficient ease for all the purposes of life ; and for this reason among others she always gave the Irish versions of the songs in question rather than the English ones.”<sup>1</sup>

Carleton’s education was of the humblest description. As his father removed from one small farm to another, from townland to townland, Carleton attended the hedge-schools wherever he happened to be. Government, in its endeavor to crush out Catholic education, had only surrounded it, as it had the Catholic priesthood, with a halo ; and Carleton shared in the

<sup>1</sup> O’Donoghue’s *Life of Carleton*, Vol. I, pp. 5–7.

strange enthusiasm for Greek and Latin, and "the larnin'" in general, that was not uncommon among ditchers and ploughboys. Carleton sat under a series of hedge-schoolmasters, and knew by experience both the harmlessly eccentric, and cruel and violent variety; a niece of his died of an inflammation that resulted from the master's plucking her ear with such violence as to bring on inflammation of some of the internal tendons. Carleton also picked up here and there some smattering of higher learning as opportunity offered.

In his fifteenth year he started for Munster in search of education as a poor scholar. The plan was not carried out, however, and he was soon home again, devoting himself assiduously to the enjoyment of fairs and markets, wakes, weddings, christenings, and merrymakings. For some two or three years he remained at home, and was distinguished as a dancer and athlete of local celebrity, and a prominent figure at all festivities. As a true peasant, too,—we have his own word for it,—he was an adept at dressing and swinging the "sprig of shillelagh." He enjoyed also a great reputation for his supposed learning, among his own family more

especially, which led them to destine him for the priesthood.

When about nineteen he left home again, this time on a pilgrimage. His father had often told him the stories that centred about St. Patrick's Purgatory on the little island in Lough Derg. To this romantic spot Carleton went as one of the stream of pilgrims. What he saw there affected him unfavorably, set him thinking on religious questions, and was the occasion of his later change of faith, for he became a Protestant, though in later years he returned, in sympathy at least, to the religion of his fathers.

An epoch in Carleton's life was made by his chancing upon a copy of *Gil Blas*. A longing to see the world consumed him, and he left home a third time, making his way to Dublin, where for years he had a hard struggle with poverty; indeed, all through his life the wolf was never far from the door. In Dublin he fell in with Cæsar Otway, a Protestant controversialist and proselytizer, who, though of a harsh and unamiable character, stood Carleton's friend, and gave him his start in literature by getting him to write his account of his Lough Derg pilgrimage (from a Protestant controversialist

point of view) in *The Lough Derg Pilgrim*, later included in the *Traits and Stories*.

From this time on his life was uneventful. He married the daughter of a schoolmaster, and taught for a while, but eventually supported himself entirely by his pen. When about thirty years old he published the *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (1830), which established his reputation. Then came *Fardarougha the Miser* (1839), and *Valentine M'Clutchy* (1847).

The Young Ireland movement was at this time in full swing. Carleton did not escape from its influence, and contributed to *The National Library* the short novels *Paddy Go-Easy* (1845), *Rody the Rover* (1845), and *Art Maguire* (1847), all designed to correct peasant weaknesses and follies—intemperance, bad farming and house-keeping, and secret societies. On Banim's death, he applied, without success, for the pension the government had given his fellow-novelist. Had he obtained it, he would have been freed from the hack work that may have had something to do with the decline of his genius. Carleton died in Dublin in 1869, at the age of seventy.

Carleton's work, unique in many ways, is

especially so for the light it throws upon the strange system of peasant education that prevailed in the days of his youth. "The Hedge School" and "Going to Maynooth," two tales from the *Traits and Stories*, give a most full and faithful account of the hedge-schoolmaster — that quaint and curious product of the laws against Catholic education, — of his school, his methods of instruction, his pupils, and his status in rural social life. The fact that the hedge-schoolmaster and the hedge-school have passed away forever under the stress of social changes gives these stories a strong interest as social documents.

The hedge-schoolmasters were a class of men so called because, when the penal laws were in operation and to teach publicly in a schoolhouse was impossible, they would settle on some green spot behind a hedge, where the sons of the farmers from the country round flocked to them, in spite of spies and statutes, to learn whatever they could teach. Even after the abolition of the penal laws against Catholic education the same customs for a long time prevailed in neighborhoods where from poverty or other reasons there was no schoolhouse.



These masters, as Carleton presents them, were for the most part originals, eccentric to the last degree. They combined a real enthusiasm for learning with a deal of ludicrous pedantry. Learning was scarce in the country, and any one having the character of it excited in the peasantry a profound reverence that kept the pride of these gentlemen at the full stretch of inflation. In their deportment they were consequential and dictatorial, with the airs of superiority that resulted from a sense of their own knowledge and a pitying contempt for the dark ignorance of those around them. In the effort to preserve their professional dignity, they intrenched themselves behind a great solemnity of manner, which the irrepressible humor of their country was continually attacking and breaking through. A curious custom that prevailed among them, in accordance with which a hedge-schoolmaster established himself by driving away those less qualified and usurping their place, made acuteness and quickness as essential to them as learning. If a schoolmaster desired to settle in a town which already possessed a teacher, the proper method of procedure was to challenge him to a public debate upon the chapel

green or some convenient place. The peasants always witnessed these debates with the keenest relish, and encouraged them as tending to maintain a high standard in the profession. In such contests the victory was to the ready-witted, and once a master was defeated — “sacked” or “made a hare of” were the Irish expressions — the reverence of the country-side was gone from him and forthwith transferred to the person of the victor. It was not expected of the hedge-schoolmaster to instruct in morality or religion; that was the priest’s business, and, indeed, these men were far from exemplary in manners and morals. An inordinate love of whiskey, odd as it may appear, was often a recommendation in a teacher, and one which, to do them justice, few were without. This is illustrated in “The Hedge-School.” An Irish peasant is asked why he sent his child to Mat Meegan, a master notoriously addicted to liquor, rather than to Mr. Frazer, a man of sober habits who taught in the same neighborhood: —

“‘Why do I send them to Mat Meegan, is it?’ he replied — ‘and do you think, sir,’ said he, ‘that I’d send them to that dry-headed dunce, Mr. Frazher, with his black coat upon him, and

his caroline hat, and him wouldn't take a glass of poteen wanst in seven years? Mat, sir, likes it, and taches the boys ten times betther whin he's dhrunk nor whin he's sober; and you'll never find a good tacher, sir, but's fond of it. As for Mat, when he's *half gone*, I'd turn him agin the country for deepness in larning; for it's then he rhymes it out of him, that it would do one good to hear him.'

" 'So,' said I, 'you think that a love of drinking poteen is a sign of talent in a schoolmaster?'

" 'Ay, or in any man else, sir,' he replied. 'Look at tradesmen, and 'tis always the cleverest that you'll find fond of the dhrink! If you had hard Mat and Frazher, the other evening, at it — what a hare Mat made of him! but he was just in proper tune for it, being, at the time, purty well I thank you, and did not lave him a leg to stand upon. He took him in Euclid's Ailments and Logicals, and proved in Frazher's teeth, that the candlestick before them was the church-steeple, and Frazher himself the parson; and so sign was on it, the other couldn't disprove it, but had to give in.' "

The schoolroom scenes in "The Hedge-School" are wonderful in dialogue and as genre pictures, and impress the reader with a sense of reality as vivid as the printed page can convey. One or two extracts from the story will illustrate this, the first a passage describing the

scholars. Surrounding a large turf fire in the centre of the schoolhouse floor is a circle of urchins —

“Sitting on the bare earth, stones, and has-socks, and exhibiting a series of speckled shins, all radiating towards the fire like sausages on a *Poloni* dish. There they are — wedged as close as they can sit ; one with half a thigh off his breeches, another with half an arm off his tattered coat — a third without breeches at all, wearing as a substitute a piece of his mother’s old petticoat pinned about his loins — a fourth, no coat — a fifth, with a cap on him, because he has got a scald, from having sat under the juice of fresh hung bacon — a sixth with a black eye — a seventh two rags about his heels to keep his kibes clean — an eighth crying to get home, because he has got a headache, though it may be as well to hint, that there is a drag-hunt to start from beside his father’s in the course of the day. In this ring, with his legs stretched in a most lordly manner, sits, upon a deal chair, Mat himself, with his hat on, basking in the enjoyment of unlimited authority. His dress consists of a black coat, considerably in want of repair, transferred to his shoulders through the means of a clothes-broker in the county-town ; a white cravat, round a large stuffing, having that part which comes in contact with the chin somewhat streaked with brown — a black waistcoat, with one or two ‘tooth-an’-egg’ metal buttons sewed on where the original had fallen off —

black corduroy inexpressibles, twice dyed, and sheep's-gray stockings. In his hand is a large, broad ruler, the emblem of his power, the woeful instrument of executive justice and the signal of terror to all within his jurisdiction. In a corner below is a pile of turf, where, on entering, every boy throws his two sods, with a *hitch* from under his left arm. He then comes up to the master, catches his forelock with finger and thumb, and bobs down his head, by way of making him a bow, and goes to his seat. Along the walls on the ground is a series of round stones, some of them capped with a straw collar or hassock, on which the boys sit; others have bosses, and many of them hobs — a light but compact kind of boggy substance found in the mountains. On these several of them sit; the greater number of them, however, have no seats whatever, but squat themselves down, without compunction, on the hard floor. . . . Near the master himself are the larger boys, from twenty-two to fifteen — shaggy-headed slips, with loose-breasted shirts lying open about their bare chests; ragged colts, with white, dry, bristling beards upon them, that never knew a razor; strong stockings on their legs; heavy brogues, with broad, nail-paved soles; and breeches open at the knees."

In "The Poor Scholar" Carleton presents a social type as distinctly the product of the penal laws as the hedge-schoolmaster. The so-called

"poor scholars" were recruited from the poorest of the peasantry in districts where next to no Catholic education could be had, where the stirring lad might contrive to learn reading and writing, but scarcely more.

It was the highest ambition of the Irish peasant to make a priest of his boy, as it was of the Scotch peasant to see his son a minister of the Kirk. If a boy showed a love for "the larnin'," was eager to pursue it, and generally clever and promising, his father was apt to destine him for the priesthood. A subscription raised among the neighbors solved the question of ways and means. Thus provided with a small sum to start him, the poor scholar made for the south—for Munster, the paradise of hedge-schoolmasters and the goal for poor scholars. The sketch of Jemmy M'Evoy, the poor scholar of Carleton's tale, will bring out the general character and experiences of the class.

Jemmy M'Evoy is the son of a poor man who tills a "spot" of barren farmland. For all their drudgery from morning to night and from year's end to year's end, the family can scarce keep body and soul together. Jemmy resolves to



raise his old father from distress, or die in the struggle. He plans to start for Munster as a poor scholar to educate himself for the priesthood, and swears he will never return until he can come back "a priest an' a gintleman." To further the plan, the support of the parish priest is enlisted. He puts the case before his congregation, and asks from them, as was customary, a generous subscription to start the poor scholar to Munster to make himself "a priest an' a gintleman." A good collection comes in; his funds are sewed in the lining of his coat; and the bundle is over his shoulder. Then follows the parting with mother and father and brothers and sisters — an uproar of grief, last embraces, and benedictions mingled with the bursts of lamentation; then the open road for the south; kind entertainment by the way, and no pay accepted from the poor scholar; Munster at last; a hedge-school receives him, and the first step is taken toward making himself "a priest an' a gintleman." The poor scholar, quick and industrious as he is, serves as the butt of the master's gibes and insult, and the victim of his brutal temper. As a climax to his trials he catches a contagious fever that is raging.

The master then promptly turns him out upon the road. Having pulled through the fever, steady in the purpose to make himself a priest and relieve the destitution of his family, he returns to the hedge-school to brave again the tyrannies of the master. The poor scholar's trials end happily, however. The story of the master's barbarity gets abroad, and brings him kind friends who send him to a good school. In due time he is ordained; returns to his home in the north; is received by his own with open arms and pious jubilations, and is "a priest an' a gintleman" at last.

In *Valentine M'Clutchy* (a powerful book, despite its grossly partisan spirit) Carleton gives a detailed study of the character and career of an Irish land agent or middleman of the worst type, of Orange bigotry at work, and of the so-called New Reformation movement in its attempts at the conversion of Papists.

There are middlemen, or land agents, everywhere, but political and social conditions gave Ireland a type of its own. The course of Irish history had made most of its landlords Protestants. The position of an Irish Protestant landlord living in the midst of a degraded

population, differing from him in race and religion, had but little attraction, and hence the landlord was apt to live abroad, especially if he possessed English as well as Irish estates, as many Irish landlords did. The system of middlemen was the necessary result of this absenteeism. The landlord, disliking the trouble and difficulty of collecting rents from a number of small tenants, abdicated his active functions, and let his land for a long term, and, generally speaking, at a moderate rent, to a large tenant, or middleman, who took upon himself the whole practical management of the estate, raised the rent of the landlord, and over and above this made a profit for himself by subletting. Sometimes the head tenant followed the example of his landlord, and, abandoning all serious industry, left the care of the property to his subtenant, and in turn became an absentee. He, perhaps, sublet his tenancy again at an increased rent, and the process continued until there might be a half-dozen persons between the landlord and the cultivator of the soil. The fact that many of the landlords were almost perpetual absentees, together with the fact that many of the Irish land agents were

magistrates as well, gave the Irish middlemen almost unlimited power for tyranny and oppression, and made them the pest of Irish society.

Valentine M'Clutchy, who gives this book its name, has worked himself up from process-server to bailiff, from bailiff to constable, from constable to under-agent, or practical manager of the estate, and thence to chief agent or middleman. This last position he obtained by displacing the good agent who preceded him. The young absentee lord, who spent his time in fashionable dissipations in England, was, between his betting books, his yacht, and his mistress, always in desperate financial straits. M'Clutchy contrived to convince his lordship that the old agent was too soft and humane. He would handle the estate, he assured the young lord, less tenderly, and bring in a larger return. So the estate changed hands, and M'Clutchy became head agent. Once in the position, it is his principle to make the interest of landlord and tenant subservient to his own. To put this principle into practice he strengthens his arm to the utmost. As middleman he has all the power of a landlord. He next aims for the magistracy. A

bribe sets him upon the bench ; and the powers of the landlord for good or ill are backed by the arm of the law.

He now goes to work in the most approved style of bad agent. The schools, which the good agent, his predecessor, had patronized, are opposed on the ground that they make the peasant independent and politically unmanageable. With apparent good nature he allows the tenants to fall into arrears with their rent ; in reality he is lax that he may get a lever to force stiff-necked peasants into compliance with his dictation at election time on penalty of immediate eviction. He tricks them by defective leases. They have trusted his verbal promises only to find them brazenly forgotten, or denied at convenience. They have known him to secrete papers in the thatch eaves of their cabins—forged proofs of treasonable plots of which they are innocent. They have seen his drunken, profligate son outrage their feelings in times of deep distress by making the tenure of house and home conditional upon a daughter's or sister's dishonor. The tenants have come to fear his power and his craft, and to recognize as well the business capacity that guides his cruelty and rapacity.

Though M'Clutchy has the peasantry under his heel, is on the road to wealth, and commands a kind of consideration in the country as a stirring man of business and a strong ally of the government, all does not run smooth. The temper of the peasantry becomes ferocious. A coward as well as a tyrant, he fears for his life, and to make himself secure in his tyranny determines to raise an Orange Yeomanry Cavalry corps. A petition to the government for its incorporation being granted, he organizes the corps, captains it himself, and makes it the instrument of his outrages and the support of his personal and official tyrannies.

This is the one of the Irish novels that, in following the career of M'Clutchy as a zealous Orangeman, master of an Orange lodge, and captain of a corps of Orange cavalry, best succeeds in putting the reader on intimate terms with the Orangemen in general, their place in the Irish life of the first decade of the nineteenth century, their prejudices, feelings, aims, and manners.

The Orangemen took their name, of course, from William of Orange, who was regarded as the champion of Irish Protestantism. In its



origin Orangeism was an outgrowth of the feuds between the lower ranks of Papists and Protestants in the north — at first only the Protestant side of a party fight. Subsequently, when there was imminent danger of a French invasion, the gentlemen of the Ascendency, who had hitherto held aloof from the society, placed themselves at the head of their Protestant tenantry, and began organizing the Orangemen into lodges. The country gentlemen who identified themselves with the Orangemen were almost all bigots, frantically opposed to admitting Catholics to Parliament, or to any concession of Catholic relief, and red-hot champions of the existing constitution of church and state. The society, under their control, became a political association, in recognized alliance with the government, against Catholic disaffection, and every kind of rebel, Protestant or Catholic. A desire on the part of the Orangemen to enroll themselves into cavalry and infantry corps for the defence of the Protestant constitution was regarded with favor by the government, and members recruited from the Orange lodges were incorporated as Yeomanry Corps. A book of rules and regulations circulated among the

members of the society, showed that it aimed at high moral excellence. Every Orangeman was expected, it was said, to have a sincere love for his Maker, to be an enemy to brutality, and to promote the honor of King and country and the principles of Protestant Ascendancy. He was expected to refrain from cursing and intemperance, and to combat, so far as was in his power, the forces of atheism and anarchy.

Carleton's satire turns upon the discrepancy between the high-flown professions and the actual practice of the Orangemen. He describes the meeting of the lodge of which M'Clutchy is the master. The lodge room is reeking with the fumes of hot punch and tobacco. A mixed company is assembled — Orange blacksmiths, butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers, pious, punch-loving Dissenters, grand jurors, hard-drinking squires, all more or less boisterously drunk, singing party songs, quarrelling, and now and again pausing to drink in due form the loyal toast to "the glorious, pious, and immortal memory of the great and good King William, who saved us from Popery, brass money, and wooden shoes," or its complement, "To hell with the Pope." From such meetings as these

the yeomanry not infrequently sallied, when sufficiently drunk, to ride through the streets, firing about at random, singing, and shouting "Any money for the face of a papist," "To hell with the Pope," "Ram down the Catholics," and the like. Or sometimes they might pay a visit to an inoffensive Catholic family—to satisfy a private grudge perhaps—on the pretext of searching for concealed weapons, routing the household out of bed, turning the house upside down, insulting the women folk, and terrifying all hands with the possibility of they knew not what drunken violence. Or, again, they might ride to the house of the priest, startling the good man from his rest by firing volleys over his house-top (if their aim was steady enough to clear it) to the tune of "Croppies Lie Down." But this was only boisterous "funning." Their real service was in riding with M'Clutchy to dispossess poor, rack-rented tenants, who, perhaps, had so good a "back" in the country that for a few bailiffs to evict, without an armed force, was out of the question. The fate of M'Clutchy in this novel was not infrequently the fate of men of his class. The bad middleman, unjust magistrate, and violent Orangeman

was found dead one morning, shot through the heart by a peasant whom he had wronged.

Carleton throws a flood of light on the secret societies, which, Catholic or Protestant, and under different names, were so startling a feature of Irish life. In most of his tales and novels he relies for a strong element of interest upon these societies and their operations. There is a romantic appeal in the mystery that hangs over their nocturnal meetings, and the desperate deeds in which discovery means death to the perpetrator, and success means death or violence to the victim.

*Rody the Rover* is devoted exclusively to this subject. Carleton was at one time himself a Ribbonman, and, so far at least as the operation and effects of Ribbonism are concerned, knew whereof he spoke. According to the theory of this story Ribbonism originated with a set of bold, shrewd rascals who, ready to stake their lives for the chance of gain, and pretending to be friends of the peasantry and champions of their religion, banded them together and incited them to violence. Then the originators of the society, who were in the secret of the movements of the lodges all over the country, would

repair at their convenience to Dublin Castle, represent themselves as in a position to make valuable disclosures as to the plans of the disaffected peasantry, provided they were substantially remunerated for the danger they ran as informers.

Rody, the central figure of the story, is an emissary of the instigators of the movement, and his procedure is meant to illustrate the methods of effecting its organization. The field of operations is a little village. Here a young stranger one fine day makes his appearance. He gives himself out a fugitive from justice. In a scrimmage between Catholics and Orangemen he laid an Orangeman low, he says, and the man, to get him in trouble, refused to recover. This of course opens all hearts and homes to him. Tom M'Mahon, an unsuspecting young peasant, takes Rody—for so is the stranger called—to his own home. Plausible, shrewd, and daring, Rody insinuates himself into M'Mahon's friendship, and finally tells him, in awful secrecy, that he wishes to make him a member of a widespread conspiracy for the liberation of their country and religion. He professes himself unable to reveal the leaders of the conspiracy, but darkly

hints that O'Connell and other patriots and Catholic champions are behind the movement, though their safety and policy compel them to denounce the society publicly. M'Mahon takes these overtures in good faith, and, after binding himself by an oath never to reveal the person who has made the communication to him, the Ribbon oath itself is administered. Having taken the oath he is straightway made an Article Bearer (one entitled to administer the oath to others), and empowered to enroll and captain fifty of the boys of the neighborhood. The story proceeds to show the difficulties Tom M'Mahon found in controlling his men after he had called this organization, with its possibilities for evil, into existence. He is honest and humane, but soon the control of the men gets into other hands. Instead of aiming, vaguely perhaps, at generous religious and patriotic ends, the Ribbonmen, now led by the base and ignorant, make their society subserve plans of private spite, and are ready to rush into acts of violence at the dictates of headlong impulses and base passions. Soon the whole character of the neighborhood changes. The midnight meetings, and the whiskey-drinking that went with them, broke



up habits of regular industry. Peace was gone ; dark passions awoke and ruled, with bloodshed, riot, and conflagration as the order of the day and night, while soldiers, posses of sheriffs, and peelers were ever tramping the country-side.

The ending of the story emphasizes the thought of the whole book. Tom M'Mahon, though generous and honest, is accused of a murder which he did his best to prevent his brother Ribbonmen from committing. Rody is instrumental in fastening the responsibility of the crime upon him. M'Mahon, though innocent, is executed. The instigators of all the trouble, who are back of Rody, turn informers and are handsomely rewarded by the government, a reward by which Rody also profits in his degree. Thus, in Carleton's view, in the matter of Ribbonism, the peasantry are blind and silly dupes in the hands of rapacious and designing monsters, who play the part of double-faced traitors, stir up disaffection only to betray it to the government, and grow fat upon the proceeds. *Rody the Rover* is said to have produced a deep impression among the peasantry. Carleton himself claimed it resulted in the disbandment of six hundred Ribbon lodges.

True as Carleton's picture is of the effects of Ribbonism, and useful and convincing as was its lesson to the people of the futility of accomplishing their ends by the operation of secret societies that defied the law, its theory of the origin of Ribbonism is baseless. The origin of the society is wrapped in a cloud of mystery and uncertainty which investigation has not yet dispelled.

In *The Black Prophet*, Carleton writes the story of one of the famines that from time to time desolated Ireland, and made fearful pages in the annals of the most distressful country that ever yet was seen. Before a background of dreadful and harrowing scenes from the famine of 1817 is unfolded a tale of crime and guilt in itself sufficient to shadow the story with gloom. Carleton was a young man at the time when the action of this story is supposed to have occurred, and images of the suffering of those days seem to have been branded upon his memory, as upon the memory of the people in general, in letters of fire. Of this and other famines the potato, that dangerous and demoralizing esculent, Raleigh's fatal gift, was the more immediate cause. It was the staple, almost the

only food of the people, and a failure of the crop meant starvation.

In *The Black Prophet* the approach of this famine of 1817, and the succeeding stages in its progress, are presented in special instances of tragic distress. It opens with descriptions of the natural phenomena that foretold the coming calamity — the heavy canopy of low, dull clouds that emptied themselves in ceaseless rain upon the land; the fields that should have waved with ripe grain covered only with thin, backward crops; lowlands ravaged by flood; the corn prostrate under layers of mud and gravel, and all autumn's bounty destroyed by the wet and sunless days that spoke ominously of imminent dearth and destitution. The famine comes in course, and with it the pestilence; and the progress of the two is followed as they sweep over the land, leaving terror and desolation in their train. The kitchens, well-stocked in happier times, are now unfurnished. The family groups are sickly, woe-worn, marked by the look of care and depression which bad and insufficient food impressed upon the countenance. Harrowing pictures, sparing no physical horror, are given of the afflicted people.

Every face has the look of painful abstraction, telling plainly of the sleepless solicitation of hunger that mingles itself with every thought and act. All who come upon the scene of the story bear in some form the sorrowful impress of the fatal visitation that ravaged the land. Garments hang loose about wasted persons; the eyes move with a dull and languid motion; the parchment skin clings to the sharp protruding bones.

It was typhus that went with the famine of 1817, a trying disease both to sufferers and to those who tend them — slow in coming, long to stay, and attended by a train of tedious and lingering miseries that were increased a hundred-fold by destitution and want. All the feelings of family affection, almost morbidly intense among the lower Irish, were allowed, while the disease ran its course, full and painful time to be racked to the limit of human suffering.

The misery had many aspects. Everywhere were reminders of the gloomy triumph famine and pestilence were achieving over the country. The roads were black with funerals, and chapel bells busy ringing dead men's knells.

Numberless fever-stricken mendicants died in the temporary sheds erected for them by the roadsides. Families hitherto respectable and independent cast aside shame and pride, and in the frightful struggle between life and death went about soliciting alms with the clamor and importunity of professional beggars, or, goaded by the cravings of hunger, fought like vultures for the dole of charity at the soup shops, or other public depots of relief where rations of bread and meal were dispensed. Not the least of the trials of the afflicted people was the sight of the bursting granaries of snug farmers and miserly meal-mongers who found their profit in selling little doles of meal at famine prices; or the sight of lines of heavily laden provision carts on their way to neighboring harbors for exportation, meeting or mingling with the funerals that were continually passing along the highways. Hunger breaks through stone walls, and, as might be expected at such a time, the restraints that normally protect property were disregarded. Starving multitudes in the ravening madness of famine broke into and pillaged granaries and mills, or attacked the cruel misers, who, forced

to distribute provisions on pain of death, at last became charitable with a bad grace. Provision carts also were intercepted by starving hordes who helped themselves to the contents, gobbling up the raw meal like famished maniacs, or staggering home to their families with bundles of the precious spoil.

*The Black Prophet* is a lookout upon a land laboring under a grievous affliction, where suffering, sorrow, and death prevailed. But now and again the horrors of famine are transfigured by the light of love they kindle, by the profound sympathies, the heroic self-sacrifice, the beautiful spirit of piety and lowly resignation that are awakened. This terrible calamity even wears at moments the expression of benevolence, as when it drives black passions from the hearts of the peasants, and wipes out hates and feuds to make of old enemies kind friends ready with help and pity. And there are lovely and memorable characters whose personalities remain as old acquaintances after the incidents of the story are forgotten — old men and women with the rugged and primitive grandeur of Old Testament people; Mave Sullivan, a character sweet and sound, made all of gentleness, firm-



ness, purity, and love; and Sally M'Gowan, irresistibly interesting in the fierce untamed beauty of a mixed nature, swept by the tides of impulse to evil or good.

*The Black Prophet* is a book which no one can read with indifference. It is written from the heart of the author saddened by the spectacle of the terrible affliction upon his countrymen. Its pictures are dreadful as a new *Inferno*. The atmosphere of this story of suffering and crime is one of deadening gloom, and it haunts the mind at last with a general sense of the appalling disasters to which man, body and spirit, is exposed.

## CHAPTER IV

### TYPES AND TYPICAL INCIDENTS

AMONG the types of Irish fiction the ladies naturally have the precedence. Unhappily the lady heroines of the novelists of the gentry are not within measurable distance of doing justice to the charm of their originals. The first native flower among them is the Lady Geraldine of Miss Edgeworth's *Ennui*. It is she who brings to her feet the blasé Earl of Glenthorn, an English-bred exquisite, proof against the fashionable graces of London belles. *Ennui* in part records the earl's impressions of this young Irish lady who has fascinated him, and who is so different from the English ladies he has known. He finds her more animated in conversation, a little more rhetorical in her speech, and a little more demonstrative in gesture. There is a graceful rapidity and point in her thoughts, and a touch of eloquence in her ready expression of them.

In her manner she is unconstrained, candid, and affable. Though without an Irish accent, properly speaking, she yet has certain inflections unmistakably Hibernian. She is truly Irish in her disdain for those of her countrywomen who ape the accent and manners of English women of fashion. The earl finds a charm, too, in the raciness of Irish wit and the oddity of Irish humor that play brightly through her talk. A love of fun that found an outlet sometimes in a practical joke upon the affectations or snobishness of the company reminded him that she was not cut after the English pattern. Lady Geraldine's wit turns naturally upon what was antipathetic to the Irish temperament — upon stiffness, affectation, undue solemnity, and all the sworn enemies of the keen natural perception of humbug and incongruity. English noblemen and pretentious gentlemen from the castle, military and other, with arrogance and pomposity unsupported by natural ability, shunned the bright shower of her raillery, or were brought to the dust perhaps by the stiletto wit which though brandished nonchalantly still dealt mortal thrusts.

All the other Irish ladies of Miss Edgeworth's

national tales, both heroines and minor women, have about them a fatal conventionality of sentiment, manners, speech, and act. They are like embodiments of the chapter on "Female Accomplishments" in *Practical Education*. They play, sing, sketch, speak French, talk poetry—in short have all the polite drawing-room acquirements. Though carefully observed, and correct in the single traits of character, they lack the spark of life.

Lever's heroines, and his minor women too, excepting the comic ones, are in their own way as vague and conventional as Miss Edgeworth's. His fun about the sex is always better than his earnest, and that love has a place in his fiction at all is only a concession to the conventions of the novel. There is an exception to these remarks, however, for Baby Blake, Charles O'Malley's cousin, is quite alive, a wild flower of the western soil, and worth all the rest of his high-born, high-bred, and conventional leading ladies put together.

The youngest of Charles O'Malley's girl cousins—hence her nickname Baby Blake—is a fun-loving, breezy young lady; in manners the perfection of carelessness and ease; ardent, warm-

hearted, and with a spirit and temper of her own. She dotes on the army, and adores dancing and riding. It is this young lady who, after O'Malley's return from his first campaign, rides to O'Malley Castle and calls upon her old play-fellow cousin Charles, just to see why cousin Charles has not called upon her; who, not being promptly admitted by the door makes her way into the drawing-room by a window, where she is discovered by her cousin, on his return, seated at the piano, singing with comic gusto the "Man for Galway," to her own tripping accompaniment; who, after greetings exchanged, charms her cousin by the arch apology for the rent in her riding-habit, the result of the informal entrance by the window, which she displays by thrusting through the torn garment a pretty foot; and who, laughing at Charlie's hesitation to invite her to lunch in bachelor's hall, coolly settles herself as his guest. She is much the same sort of girl as the Kitty Dwyer of *Sir Jasper Carew*, who "was never out of humor, could ride anything that ever was backed, didn't care what she wore, never known to be sick, sulky, or sorry for any thing." Lever has a way of summing up in a

song the best things of his prose ; and so in this case. Baby Blake is, in all but name, the Mary Draper of the song.

- “ Don't talk to me of London dames,  
Nor rave about your foreign flames,  
That never lived — except in drames,  
Nor shone, except on paper ;  
I'll sing you 'bout a girl I knew,  
Who lived in Ballywhacmacrew,  
And, let me tell you, mighty few  
Could equal Mary Draper.
- “ Her cheeks were red, her eyes were blue,  
Her hair was brown, of deepest hue,  
Her foot was small, and neat to view,  
Her waist was slight and taper ;  
Her voice was music to your ear,  
A lovely brogue, so rich and clear,  
Oh, the like I ne'er again shall hear  
As from sweet Mary Draper.
- “ She'd ride a wall, she'd drive a team,  
Or with a fly she'd whip a stream,  
Or maybe sing you 'Rousseau's Dream,'  
For nothing could escape her ;  
I've seen her, too — upon my word —  
At sixty yards bring down a bird ;  
Oh ! she charmed all the Forty-third !  
Did lovely Mary Draper.
- “ And at the spring assizes ball,  
The junior bar would one and all  
For all her fav'rite dances call,  
And Harry Deane would caper ;



Lord Clare would then forget his lore,  
King's Counsel, voting law a bore,  
Were proud to figure on the floor,  
For love of Mary Draper.

"The parson, priest, sub-sheriff, too—  
Were all her slaves — and so would you,  
If you had only but one view  
Of such a face and shape, or  
Her pretty ankles — but, ohone!  
It's only west of old Athlone  
Such girls were found — and now they're gone;  
So here's to Mary Draper." <sup>1</sup>

Of the peasant women of the novelists of the peasantry there is perhaps no type which Carleton has not presented more successfully than any of his brother novelists. Here he shows the master hand. In the peasant girls, Una O'Brien of *Fardarougha*, Mave Sullivan of *The Black Prophet*, and Kathleen of *The Emigrants of Ahadarra*, he embodies the traits of his ideal of young womanhood. These maidens are all of one type, but with the individual variations that give to each the freshness of a new creation. Carleton's heroines are generally introduced in brief descriptions, tributes of admiration to the charms of his humble countrywomen. Again

<sup>1</sup> Charles O'Malley, p. 420.

and again he pauses in the stories to dilate with pride upon the symmetry of their forms, rounded to fulness by youth, activity, and health, upon the unconstrained freedom of bearing, the glowing hue of the cheek, the power of the glance, and the lively charm of ever changing expression.

Una O'Brien, one of the loveliest of Carleton's heroines, has in a high degree the wonderful capacity for the happiness of pure love, which she shares with the others of her class, and with it a melancholy that drifts like a cloud over the brightest joy, suggesting fears that such exalted happiness is too good to last, and that some catastrophe will shatter it like a dream. She has, too, the alert and sensitive conscience that, even in the innocent rapture of the first meetings with her lover, is awake, and prompts a prayer that there may be nothing of guilt in the stolen trysts. In the fervor of her love Una is like the whole company of these heroines, as she is also in the high-strung nature, that often breaks under the tension of extreme grief or anxiety—in Una's case into the delirium of fever.

Mave Sullivan, famed for "the fair face and the good heart," who moves like a good angel

through the famine scenes of *The Black Prophet*, and changes, under the stunning calamities of the famine and pestilence, from the mild and gentle girl with a garland of unostentatious virtues, to the woman of resolute spirit and heroic devotion, is an embodiment of that touching spirit of charity so generally a possession of the Irish peasant. With a heroism that overcomes the peasant's mortal fear of contagion, she ministers at the bedsides of her neighbors, sharing with them her last crust and last potato. She has, too, the Irish gift of sympathy, and with it a serenity of spirit that comes from her transparent goodness, purity, and guileless sincerity, and gives her a strange power over those troubled in mind, or in sickness and affliction. Mave's affection for Condry Dalton is the same as that of Una for the hero of *Fardarougha*, kindling into a warmer devotion as misfortune and poverty are poured upon him.

Kathleen of the *Emigrants of Ahadarra*, the loveliest, perhaps, of all the peasant heroines, in her devotion to her lover shows a passion as pure, fine, and unselfish as that of Mave and Una. When her parents urge her to renounce

her manly lover for the suitor of their choice, a shifty fellow and rustic profligate, who will bring her goods and land, she rebukes them with a simple dignity that leaves them abashed with the sense that they are dealing with one moved by better motives than their own. Zeal for the faith, strong in all these heroines, is in Kathleen stern and uncompromising, and disputes with love the sway of a master passion. Convinced by evidence (false it appears later), in spite of herself, that her lover, consulting his interests, has voted for a candidate whose principles are hostile to their religion, and has soiled his hands with a bribe, she renounces him in the offended pride of principle, and in chagrin that she could have fixed her affection upon a man capable of things base and dishonorable.

Hannah, the sister of Kathleen, described by her mother as "a madcap, . . . an antick crather, dear knows—her heart's in her mouth every minute of the day; an' if she gets through the world wid it always as light, poor girl, it'll be well for her,"<sup>1</sup> is a type that, with the same fine traits for the groundwork of her nature as the heroines just mentioned, shades off from them

<sup>1</sup> *Emigrants of Ahadarra*, p. 518.

by the possession of a temperament more mirthful and lively, and a larger measure of the winning caprice that gives more or less of piquancy to them all. In Hannah may be noted one other striking trait of the peasant heroines of the joyous type. Her mirth is not inconsiderate laughter — “the crackling of thorns under the pot;” it is a mirth tempered as if by a sense, half unconscious perhaps, that heedless levity is out of keeping in a world where sorrow and disaster are at large.

The Irish peasant, weak on the side of restraint and reason, is in an eminent degree moved by impulse and passion, and runs the gamut of emotion, with changes of lightning rapidity, from hate to love and from fierceness to tenderness. Sarah M’Gowan of *The Black Prophet* is a satisfactory embodiment of these tendencies. Reared by her guilty father and evil stepmother in a gloomy atmosphere of dark passions, and amidst ignoble surroundings, she is very different from Una, Kathleen, and Mave, who come from the best peasant homes, where purity, cheerful kindliness, and mutual affection reign, and who, though never insipidly angelic, seem still all goodness. Of Sarah M’Gowan’s nature,

attuned, as it is, to strong impulses and prompt to respond to every stimulus to good or evil, a moral beauty, despite flaws, is the distinction, as it is the distinction of the heroines just passed in review; and this beauty expresses itself in generous acts that render the character irresistibly attractive. She is a girl who in anger stops at nothing; whom people shrink from vexing; as generally feared as loved; with an instinctive sense of honor and goodness that shows itself now in fierce scorn for what is mean, now in softer virtues. She is ready to stand by her father, murderer though he be, if he will but assure her that he committed the crime like a man, in hot blood, not like a cowardly assassin. She scorns the stepmother who would desert her father when ignominy and guilt were on his head, and join the world against him. The soul of candor, she hates sham and falsehood. With a fierce contempt she strips from her father every shred of the hypocrisy that was meant to cover his malignity, and awes that hardened villain to silence. The same scorching disdain is in the threat with which she silences the canting old miser whom she has saved from the vengeance of a starving mob, and who pretends to a sym-



pathy with the poor he will not help. And her passions range from this hatred of meanness to the tenderest affections. She appears at her best when the famine comes. Then the fiery spirit that was ready on provocation to thrust her stepmother through with a knife, and laughed at her father's commands and threats, melts to the tenderest sympathy for the sufferers. Her heart goes out to the poor wretches lying in ditches, barns, and outhouses without a hand to reach them what they want, or to bring them the priest, that they may die reconciled with the Almighty. When her only chance of happiness is staked upon winning the man she loves, and when Mave comes between them, jealousy spurs her into a plot against the character of her rival ; but her generous nature soon rights itself, throws off the temptation, and, not to be outdone in magnanimity by the girl who had risked her life to nurse her through the fever, impersonates Mave, throws herself in the way of those who came to abduct her, and saves her rival's name at the risk of her own reputation.

Among other women of Sarah's type are the wife of the coiner in Griffin's *Coiner*, and the Rose Galh of the *Battle of the Factions*, who, swinging

a large stone in her apron, struck down the man who had laid her lover low before her eyes.

Of the peasant wives and mothers Honor O'Donovan of *Fardarougha* and Bridget M'Mahon of *The Emigrants* are among the finest types. Honor O'Donovan (Carleton's mother is said to have been the original of the character), best of all the characters of the novels, represents the place of religion in the hearts of the people. When her only son, though innocent, is condemned to death, she finds, in a lively sense that she stands under the shadow of God's power and love, that which saves her from utter desolation. "What is religion good for," she exclaims, "if it does not keep the heart right, an' support us undher thrials like this, what 'ud it be then but a name?"<sup>1</sup> It is her religion that reminds her that suffering here is the lot of man, and teaches the duty of resignation as becoming one who has the Christian's hope. The man who brings the news of her son's conviction to her marvels at it:—

"God pardon me for swearin'—but be the book, the mother has the thrue ralligion in her

<sup>1</sup> *Fardarougha*, p. 175.

heart, or she'd never stand it the way she does, an' that proves what I was expoundin'; that afther all, the sorrow hap'o'rth aquil to the grace of God." <sup>1</sup>

The ready sympathy that comes from the heart and goes to the heart, doubling joys and halving sorrows, belongs also to Honor O'Donovan in full measure. It shows in her, directed by religion, a solemn and sustaining power. "Fardarougha, dear," Honor says to her husband when he is beside himself with grief over the impending fate of his son, "be a man, or rather be a Christian. It was God gave Connor to us, and who has a betther right to take him back from us? Don't be flyin' in His face bekase he don't ordher everything as you wish." <sup>2</sup> And her religion brings consolation as well as resignation. In the accents of simple unquestioning faith, which had fallen so often upon Carleton's own ears, and which is echoed so truly in the words of his peasant women, Honor exclaims of the son whom she is about to lose, "As for Connor, isn't it a comfort to know that the breath wont be out of his body, till he's a bright angel in heaven?" <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Fardarougha*, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

Another of these women of deep religious spirit and quiet enthusiasm on behalf of all goodness is Bridget M'Mahon. She well represents the intensity of the domestic affections, and the fervent tenderness with which the peasant wives and mothers enshrined those near and dear, and has in a high degree the peasant's sociability and hospitality. A graphic scene from *The Emigrants* well illustrates these things. It tells how Bridget, "ready to lep out of herself wid pure joy," welcomed home the old man on his return from a trip to Dublin. Bridget, in the glad excitement of meeting, after a long absence, thus hails the head of the family: —

"'Blessed be God, Tom darlin', that you're safe back to us! An' how are you, avourneen? An' wor you well ever since? An there was nothin' — musha, go out o' this, Ranger, you thief — och, God forgive me! what am I sayin'? sure the poor dog is as glad as the best of us — arrah, thin, look at the affectionate crathur, a'most beside himself! Dora, avillish, give him the cold stirabout that's in the skillet, jist for his affection, the crathur. Here, Ranger — Ranger, I say — oh no, sorra one's in the house now but yourself, Tom. Well, an' there was nothin' wrong wid you? . . .

“ ‘Shibby, run down to — or do you, Dora, go, you’re the souplest — to Paddy Mullen’s and Jemmy Kelly’s, and the rest of the neighbors, an’ tell them to come up, that your father’s home. Run now, acushla, an’ if you fall don’t wait to rise; an’ Shibby darlin’, do you whang down a lot of that bacon into rashers, your father must be at death’s door wid hunger; but wasn’t it well I thought of havin’ the whiskey in, for you see after Thursday last we didn’t know what minute you’d drop in on us, Tom, an’ I said it was best to be prepared. . . .

“ ‘Here,’ she said, reappearing with a huge bottle in one hand and a glass in the other, ‘a sip o’ the right sort will help you after your long journey; you must be tired, be coorse, so take this.’

“ ‘Aisy, Bridget,’ exclaimed her husband, ‘you’ll make me *heartty*.’

“ ‘Throth an’ I will fill it,’ she replied, ‘ay, an’ put a heap on it. There, now, finish that bumper.’

“ The old man, with a smiling and happy face, received the glass, and taking his wife’s hand in his, looked at her, and then upon them all, with an expression of deep emotion. ‘Bridget, your health; childre’, all your healths; and here’s to Carriglass, an’ may we long live happy in it, as we will, please God! Peety, not forgettin’ you!’ . . .

“ ‘Here, Bryan,’ said Mrs. M’Mahon, ‘lay that bottle on the dresser, it’s not worth while puttin’ it past till the neighbors comes up; an’

it's they that'll be the glad neighbors to see you safe back agin, Tom.' ”<sup>1</sup>

Several of the representative heroes of these novels have already made their appearance, among them Lady Morgan's young patriot, O'Brien; Maxwell's young military man, wild and swaggering, but gentlemanly still; Lever's hero — Lorrequer, O'Malley, or Hinton — made after the pattern of Maxwell's; and Lover's peasants, Rory O'More, and Handy Andy. Of the peasant heroes of the novelists of the peasantry, Carleton's, gathering up the distinctive traits of the rest, may without loss stand for them all. Carleton's heroes are worthy of the girls who love them. They are strong, hearty fellows, on good terms with the world and their surroundings. They have a store of manly virtues, a wit ready for every occasion, and a humor that plays good-naturedly with every one and everything. They are instinctively upright and honest, with the pith of strong sense, and capable in whatever their hands find to do. They share with their mothers and sweethearts the strong domestic affections and deep religious spirit. There is the same intense passion in

<sup>1</sup> *Emigrants of Ahadarra*, pp. 501-502.



the heroes as in the heroines; it flows full and free with a wonderful depth and volume. As lovers they are a complete success. Conor O'Donovan, Condry Dalton, Bryan M'Mahon, and Shane Fadh are the best of them. Conor might have served as the archetype of them all. He and Una are the peasant Romeo and Juliet of the Irish novel. Conor's wooing of Una is typical of the many scenes of young love depicted by the novelists of the peasantry. And Carleton is nowhere greater than in such scenes, which, in the purity and freshness of the sentiment, and in their tenderness, warmth, and delicacy, perhaps no novelist has surpassed. The tale of love is told in words simple, homely, and direct, with no suggestion of sentimentality or convention. The heroes themselves have a rude eloquence, impressive often, and especially so when it seeks to express the emotions of first love, the sense of awe, the rapture, and the kind of sacred gladness that exalt them. For all their genial qualities, their love, and their gentleness, these heroes are not men to be tampered with. They are lions when roused, and capable of a wrath as fierce as their love is tender.

Among the villains of the novels, the favorite with the novelists of the gentry is the shrewd, cold, calculating man of business, a scheming attorney he may be, or a money-lending agent, or both in one. The originals of these characters abounded in the real life of the day. The peculiar social conditions of Ireland produced a plentiful crop of them. Attorney Quirk, who turns the last of the Rackrents out of the castle because he cannot pay his debts is a villain of this type; Patrickson, Sir Ulick O'Shane's man of business, in *Ormond*, who tries to trick the unsuspecting hero out of his fortune, is another. Lever presents a group of such villains. They are the masters of the financial interests of their employers, taking advantage of their distaste or incapacity for business, to hurry them to ruin by legal chicanery or extortionate interest, and to build their own fortunes upon the ruins of the fortunes of their patrons. Among Lever's villains of this stamp are old Hickman and "honest Tom" Gleason of *The Knight of Gwynne*, Davenport Dunn, the notorious swindler, and Fagan of *Sir Jasper Carew*. Many of these villains are not of a deep dye, but take

the color of villany largely as the instruments of the catastrophes which the careless and extravagant gentry brought upon themselves.

With the novelists of the peasantry the White-boy of diabolical malignity and ferocious cruelty often does duty as murderous villain. Magistrates and middlemen of the Valentine M'Clutchy variety often play the rôle — characters, like the rascal attorneys, in large measure the product of peculiar social conditions. But it is Carleton who produces villains of the true national flavor. From the artistic standpoint villains are often a failure. Humanity disowns their blackness and pronounces them mere abstractions of evil. It is Carleton's triumph to have produced villains, that, despite black hearts and dark deeds, are men, and as admirable from the literary point of view as they are detestable from the moral. Unhappy surroundings, and their capacity for blighting the good in human nature and stimulating the evil, are brought forward and do much to explain them.

The Irish peasant nature, with a full share of the kindly and genial qualities that soften and brighten the daily intercourse of life, is well known to possess, at the other extreme, a capac-

ity for the most savage, secret, and deliberate vengeance. This ferocious vindictiveness is the master trait of one set of Carleton's villains, the blackest characters in these novels. It is this vindictiveness that impels Bartle Flanagan of *Fardarougha* to an atrocious vengeance upon the miser who had turned his parents out upon the world to starve, and upon the miser's son, who is the accepted suitor of the girl he loves. With deliberate ferocity he bides his time to strike, and finds it in the opportunity that occurs of fixing upon the miser's son the guilt of a capital crime of which he is innocent. Thus he plans to glut himself with a rich vengeance by at once robbing the miser of the son dearer to him than life, and ridding himself of a hated and successful rival.

The impulsiveness of the peasant nature, quick in rage as in love, is, in its darker aspect, the distinctive trait of villains of another stamp. Hugh O'Donnell of Carleton's *Lha Dhu, or The Dark Day* is one of these. In a moment of rage, swept out of himself by a mad rush of passion, he strikes his brother with a stone and kills him. But the fiery and scorching remorse that follows the fatal act burns away the guilt

of the crime, and leaves the impression of a man victimized by his passion, rather than deliberately villanous, more a villain in deed than in will.

A villain cast in a mould different from that of Bartle Flanagan or Hugh O'Donnell is Hycy Burke of *The Emigrants of Ahadarra*, whose master motive is an intense, unfeeling selfishness, that spares nothing that stands between him and his interests and inclinations. There is a dangerous spirit of evil in the clever head and cold heart of this handsome and plausible young rascal, who scorns the mother who spoils him, despises the homely ways of his father, plays fast and loose with the affections of Kathleen, is the malignant hypocrite to his friends, and remorselessly proceeds to shatter the purest happiness of the generous natures about him, when by so doing he can feed a gross passion, or line his purse.

In addition to the villains that have been noticed, there is in the novels a miscellaneous crew of stagey, melodramatic scoundrels, from whom, though they do desperate deeds, and in general play the bad man with credit, not a genuine shudder is to be had.

Lever is responsible for the appearance in the Irish novel of an original and altogether extraordinary set of personages — a company of old men, even more surprising in their behavior than his young swaggerers. To this group belong that charming pair of friends, Count Considine and Godfred O'Malley, who, though past three-score years and ten, still, with the zest of youth, cheat bailiffs, defy creditors, entertain the country and the hunt, tell boisterous stories, write belligerent letters, fight duels, and are in general venerable scamps. Of these old men good representatives are Bagenal Daly (the notorious Beauchamp Bagenal was the original of the character) of *The Knight of Gwynne*, and Sir Brooke Fossbrooke of the book of that title. Both are bachelors, of old stock, who carry into later age the vigor of youth, and find in the world and its pleasures an enjoyment as racy in the evening of life as on the day they first made their bow to it. They have squandered fortunes in dissipation, lost them in speculation, or put them at the disposal of needy friends. They have been everywhere, seen everything, tried all kinds of experiences. They play all games of chance and skill. They are seasoned



sportsmen. Enthusiastic convivialists, they are yet men whom excesses cannot corrupt nor dissipation degrade. They are ready for cards, the all-night rouse, and the hunter's daybreak start in the morning. Their manners show the courtliness and deference of a bygone school of breeding. Devoted admirers of the sex, they love still to pay them the homage of admiration and service. Headstrong and impetuous, they are equally ready to right wrongs or inflict them at the point of sword or pistol. Finding themselves, as the game of life is closing, stripped of everything but a name for singularity and conviviality, they yet show no disposition to complain. They are losers, but they have enjoyed the game from beginning to end; they have played fair, and in good company. In short, the author intends the reader to discover in these personages men of fine natures and great abilities wasted or run wild in eccentricity, men who have found no use for talents, place, and wealth, beyond the indulgence of caprice.

The novelists of the peasantry have also a fine set of old men to introduce. While an Irishman lives, he is lively, it would seem, and age cannot dull the spirits of these patriarchs.

Their temper may be crusty; never moping or splenetic. A call upon the feelings meets a response as prompt in age as in youth; the gusts of emotion are frequent and strong — the same blackness in storms of sorrow, the same warmth and sweetness of affection, the same heartbeat in every word of hospitality. Wrath kindles quickly, humor plays brightly, and the passion for “divilment and divarsion” remains unquenched to the end. These old men, and their women folk too, in the lighter aspects of their characters, are hit off happily in the words of the old woman, the forgotten humorist quoted in Mr. O'Donoghue's *Life of Carleton*, who observed of herself and her class, “Sure, av we are poor, at laiste we're very plaisant.”

No characters appear more frequently in the Irish novels than the faithful retainers. There is a whole company of them who maintain with their masters a relationship, in many ways distinctively Irish, and most especially so by virtue of the unfailing tact and instinctive understanding of the master's feelings, bred of love and sympathy, which taught the servant how best, by speech or silence, presence or absence, to render the most acceptable service. The first of

the band is old Thady, steward of the Rackrents, whose heart broke when Rackrent Castle passed out of "the family."

No one of the old retainers makes so strong a comic appeal as Corny Delany, servant to Phil O'Grady of *Jack Hinton*. He can hold his own with the comic originals of the eighteenth century novelists, the masters in that kind. This grim, ill-conditioned old creature, described by his master as "a crab tree planted in a lime kiln," earns his nickname of Cross Corny by an ill-temper and crankiness that never slept, and assailed friend and foe alike with continuous showers of biting gibes. He has a "bad luck" to Dublin Castle "for a riotous, disorderly place," and a "bad luck" for his grace the "lord liftinnant, and the bishops, and the jidges, and all the privy councillors," who waste "more liquor every night than would float a lighter," and laugh, sing, and carouse "as if potatoes wasn't two shillings a stone." He declares his young master a reprobate who blackguards about the streets, and that the man who would go to him for good treatment would "go to the devil for divarsion." His master's guests are served with a growl—"there's a

veal pie, and here's a cold grouse — and maybe you've eat worse before now — and will again, please God." Corny is withal a most pious Catholic, and a devout believer in ghosts of all sorts, most particularly in the ghost of his master's grandfather. Corny is but one of a band of cross-grained domestics whose warm unswerving devotion masquerades in the guise of hostility.

The company of faithful retainers has young recruits as well as old. The Denis O'Brien of Maxwell's *Captain Blake* and the Mickey Free of *Charles O'Malley* are good representatives. Denis, fosterer or foster-brother of Major Blake, is the major's body-servant, and, in character, much the same sort of fellow as he of the song sung by Denis in answer to an impertinent query as to his birthplace: —

“I courted in Cavan, play'd cards in Ardee,  
Kiss'd the maids in Dromore, and broke glass in Tralee;  
I married in Sligo, got drunk at Arboe,  
And what's that to any one, whether or no.”<sup>1</sup>

Denis, averse to cool argument, ready with a blow, with an inveterate brogue and an extinguishable thirst, was a bit of a rogue in most things, yet always true to his master, whose

<sup>1</sup> *Captain Blake*, p. 36.

wishes, right or wrong, were law. A bold heart, a stout arm and a ready wit made him a resourceful and efficient ally to the adventurous major. Mickey Free, a favorite character with Lever's readers, is of the same type, but displayed in contact with a greater variety of incident and in a fuller stream of drollery. Mickey, like Denis, is more than half a rogue, but with one fixed principle — fidelity to Master Charles.

A type of Irishman with which all the world is familiar is the stage Irishman, the conventional creature of the music hall, the farce, and the melodrama. He is commonly seen in one of three guises. He is the blundering buffoon, half fool, half wit; the capering Irishman, who speaks only in bulls and jokes, and is a jewel at a jig or at blarneying the Miss Judies. In another guise he is the wild Irishman of flaming face and scarlet whiskers, who, when "the drop is in," enters with a Celtic screech and the exhilarating whack of the shillelagh — a paragon for cracking heads at fair or market. Or again he is the gentlemanly savage who lives but to quarrel, to shoot, and be shot at. This conventional figure, now preposterously foolish and

funny, now a screeching wild man, now a fire-eater, has done duty as the typical Irishman in English literature up to the opening of the nineteenth century, when the Irish novel was born. The stage Irishman, in one form or another, is continually approached by the Irish novelists, and often completely embodied. Handy Andy is a perfect buffoon stage Irishman. And the O'Leary whom Harry Lorrequer meets in the fashionable gambling-house in Paris, playing roulette, is a perfect wild Irishman. The game goes against him, and he is rapidly losing his temper. At length, in a rage, he upsets the croupier, chair and all, sends the stakes flying over the room, leaps upon the table, and, swinging a stout blackthorn, scatters the wax-lights on all sides, shatters the candelabra, and accompanies the exploit with a series of savage cries.

The stage Irishman is an extravagant distortion of a few national traits that are easily seized, and can be managed with a certain kind of comic effect by the most heavy-handed humorist. Caricature and burlesque of a national character are, of course, legitimate forms of amusement. All nations burlesque



themselves and their neighbors. But the violent aversion Irishmen have manifested of late against the stage Irishman is not unnatural. For centuries this figure has held the stage and done duty for the complete man. Irishmen are disgusted with the old familiar clown and savage. They will own no relationship with him, would banish him from the boards, and see in his stead characters that embody what they love and honor in the Irish nature. On this side of the water disapproval of the stage Irishman has recently expressed itself in showers of eggs and storms of hisses—a form of protest that oddly combines rowdyism and solicitude for the national character.

The squireen is a social type peculiarly Irish. The squireens were a mongrel class with the manners and education of small farmers and the pretensions of gentlemen. They were men without an idea beyond a dog, a gun, a horse, and the pleasures of the table; an arrogant, ostentatious set, who spent their time at fairs, races, and cock-fights, or gambling, drinking, and fighting duels. Parading everywhere their contempt for honest labor, they gave a tone of recklessness and deviltry to every society in

which they moved. From this class, many of the small fry of Government officers were selected. The magistracy throughout the country was largely in their hands. Ireland was practically without a sober, industrious middle class like that of England, and it was these half gentry, the squireens, who, destitute of industrial virtues and concentrating in themselves the distinctive vices of the Irish character, most nearly corresponded to it. It was they who, more than any other class, sustained the race of extravagance that ran through all ranks. They were often middlemen, the agrarian tyrants who ground the peasantry to powder. Hycy Burke in Carleton's *Emigrants*, Valentine M'Clutchy's son, and Purcell of *The Tithe Proctor*, are among the representatives of the class in the novels.

Many types must necessarily remain unmentioned, but a few may still be noticed. The wild race of Irish Jehus—"the fry of rakehell horse boys," Spenser calls them—who early won that distinction as wits and reckless drivers which they have maintained to the present day, should not be forgotten. The old hags of the bony and ragged sister-

hood of Meg Merrilies, who curse and prophesy in an impressively picturesque fashion, are also memorable. Troops of eloquent and voluble beggars, the fringe of every society that is presented in the novels, itinerant pipers and fiddlers, and the humble descendants of the old senachies, are also characteristic and familiar figures.

Allusion has more than once been made to the prevalence of lawlessness in Irish life. The gentry despised the law, and the peasantry hated it. This was in part due to the injustice of the penal code itself; in part to the lax administration of the code, for the decent men of the class that made the offensive laws, revolted when it came to putting them into practical effect. Of this prevalence of lawlessness, of the contempt for the laws on the one side, and hatred of them on the other, the Irish novels give copious illustration. Some phases of this lawlessness have already been noticed — the activity of the smugglers, the meddling of the gentry in the “running trade,” and the operations of the secret societies. Another phase was the ceaseless war of debtors and creditors. Incidents serious and comic grow-

ing out of this shifty conflict are so much a part of the texture of these stories that one can scarcely conceive of their holding together without them.

As an instance of the ingenuity of debtors in eluding their creditors, may be cited the original stratagem by which Godfrey O'Malley, the uncle of Charles O'Malley, escaped from a besieging host of Dublin tradesmen and officers of the law. O'Malley is cornered, and bailiffs and process-servers are employing all the skill of their craft to prevent his escape from the city, and land him a captive at last in His Majesty's jail. O'Malley calls a council of his friends. An expedient is suggested. Notices of O'Malley's death are to be put in the Dublin papers; in due course he is to be carried from the city in a coffin, as if for burial upon his estate in the west. The ruse succeeds; he arrives in the west; and from the top of the hearse at once commences a canvass for re-election as a member of Parliament, a seat in which will secure him immunity from prosecution for debt during his term. The real secret of O'Malley's escape had gone before him. Nothing was sufficiently flattering to mark the

approbation of the peasantry for the man who had duped all the sheriffs and bailiffs in Dublin. As, amid blazing bonfires and shouts of joy, he passed on toward home, the happy tenantry showered upon him encomiums like these: "An' it's little O'Malley cares for the law — bad luck to it! it's himself can laugh at judge and jury. Arrest him! — na bocklish — catch a weazel asleep," and so forth.

The lives of bailiffs in their efforts to carry out the decrees of the law are one long chapter of distressing misadventures. An enterprising bailiff had to expect experiences like that of the unhappy man in *The Collegians*, who attempted the arrest of Mr. Conolly, a gentleman who owed more than he cared to pay. Mr. Conolly himself relates the incident: —

"In the morning, I stepped out to the stable to see how my horse had been made up in the night, when I felt a tap on the shoulder — just like that — do you feel it at all electrical? — [he touched Kyrle's shoulder] — *I* do, always. I turned, and saw a fellow in a brown coat, with a piece of paper in his hand. I was compelled to accept his invitation, so I requested that he would step into the inn, while I was taking a little breakfast. While I was doing so, and while he was sitting at the other side of

the fire, in walked Pat Falvey, Mrs. Chute's footman, with his mistress's compliments, to thank me for a present of baking-apples I had sent her. I winked at Pat, and looked at the bailiff. 'Pat,' says I, 'tell your mistress not to mention it; and Pat,' says I, dropping to a whisper, 'I'm a prisoner.' 'Very well, sir,' says Pat aloud, and bowing, as if I had given him some message. He left the room, and in ten minutes I had the whole parish about the windows. They came in, they called for the bailiff, they seized him, and beat him, until they didn't leave him worth looking at. Dooley, the nailer, caught his arm, and O'Reilly, the blacksmith, took him by the leg, and another by the hair, and another by the throat; and such a show as they made of him before five minutes, I never contemplated. But here was the beauty of it. I knew the law, so I opposed the whole proceeding. 'No rescue,' says I; 'I am his prisoner, gentlemen, and I will not be rescued; so don't beat the man! — don't toss him in a blanket! — don't drag him in the puddle! — don't plunge him into the horsepond, I entreat you!' By some fatality, my intentions were wholly misconceived, and they performed exactly the things that I warned them to avoid."<sup>1</sup>

The peasants liked the bailiffs no better than did the gentry. In Carleton's *Tubber Derg* a bailiff visits a poor widow to demand the rent. She

<sup>1</sup> *The Collegians*, pp. 230–231.



has no money, and he threatens to drive off her two cows as payment. The widow hurries to a neighbor to borrow money, if she can, to satisfy his demands. In her absence the children try another way to rid themselves of the intruder. The instinctive aversion of the peasant to the bailiff expresses itself in a spontaneous attack made upon him by the whole family. The eldest son leads the attack, seeking by kicks and cuffs to reduce him to a state of subjection. In this the younger children assist, prodding and battering him with tongs, sticks, and potato-mashers.

An extract from the correspondence of a gentleman who has been quoted before, Manus Blake, of Maxwell's *Captain Blake*, will further illustrate the attitude of the gentry toward the law and its officers. It also reflects the distaste of military men for interfering in the little differences between private gentlemen and the law. There is trouble between Manus Blake, of Blake Castle, County Galway, and Mr. Clancy, the coroner:—

“CASTLE BLAKE, April 23d.

“DEAR JACK, — I have so much to tell you, that I don't know which end to begin with. . . . But I had better tell you of my affair

with the coroner. It was last Monday week — Father Walsh was reading mass to your mother and the maids; and I was looking at Tony washing Kate Karney's eyes with extract of goulard — she is a most unlucky mare, for only the week before she was all but drowned in a marl-hole. — Well, down ran the gate-keeper's wife, as if the devil was at her heels, to say that the coroner was coming, and a whole regiment along with him. Of course we shut the doors; and in a few minutes the soldiers appeared at the head of the avenue, and Clancy, the thief of the world, riding before them on the grey pony. Sibby Philbin, the poor creature, thought all the army in the province was there; though after all there was only the light company of the 87th, commanded by a Captain Hamilton, a bosom friend of your cousin John. The soldiers came fair and easy down the road; your mother and the priest remained at prayers, as they ought to do; and I loaded the old double with a handful of swan-drops, and sat down at the lobby window, to see how things would get on.

“When the redcoats came to the carriage sweep, Captain Hamilton halted the company, and ordered arms. Clancy dismounted, pulled out an ugly bit of parchment, walked up the steps as if the house was his own, and mighty stiff he was as he gave a thundering knock at the door, that set all the dogs a-barking.

“‘Arrah, what do you want?’ says I from the window, ‘that you knock like a blacksmith?’ ‘I want admission,’ says he.

“‘I’m greatly afraid you’re not likely to get it,’ replied I. ‘You had better give it fair and peaceably,’ says he.

“‘You’re safer where you are,’ says I, ‘and on the right side to run away.’ ‘I’ll smash the door in a jiffey,’ said he.

“‘Then, upon my conscience, you’ll never smash another,’ says I; and I lifted the gun quietly, and opened both pans to see that the primings were good. Clancy stepped back, the soldiers laughed heartily, for the tenants had got the alarm, and came hopping in dozens over the park walls; and in less than no time, there they were like a swarm of bees, and every man with a shillelagh in his fist, and the girls with their aprons full of paving-stones.

“Well, Clancy got mortally afraid. ‘I hold you, sir,’ says he to Captain Hamilton, ‘accountable for my safety—and I command you to break in the door.’—‘I’d see you d—d first,’ replied the captain; ‘I came here to protect you, certainly; but do you think, you scoundrel, that I am obliged to commit a burglary?’

“‘I want you to do your duty,’ says the coroner.—‘And that I will,’ says the captain. ‘I’ll bring you safe home if you please it; but do you suppose that I will turn house-breaker?’

“The tenants gave a cheer—the soldiers a laugh—and Clancy ran into the ranks for protection.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Maxwell’s *Captain Blake*, pp. 439–444.

Abduction was a form of lawlessness very common in the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth, though the memory of it alone survives at present. Abductions are stock incidents in the novels. The father of the hero of Maxwell's *Captain Blake* takes off his lady from her father's house against his will. The father of the hero of *Hector O'Halloran* carries off his wife from a nunnery. The sister of Handy Andy only escapes abduction at the hands of a set of ruffians by Andy's ruse of disguising himself as a woman and getting himself taken off in her stead. Shane Fadh abducts the girl he makes his wife with her own consent, and had himself been the means of putting to rout the party of a rejected suitor of his sweetheart's who came to abduct her against her will.

No form of lawlessness had a stronger hold on the popular taste than duelling. Duels were fought not merely in passion, to wipe out an insult or an offence; they were often a deliberately chosen substitute for the lawsuit. The trigger-process was considered quicker and more genteel than the legal. For example, two squires in Carleton's *Battle of the Factions*, with

estates adjoining, differ on a question of boundaries. Disdaining to go to law over the matter, a duel is arranged:—

“The two squires then fought a challenge upon the head of it, and, what was more singular, upon the disputed spot itself; the one standing on their side, the other on ours; for it was just *twelve paces* every way. Their friend was a small, light man, with legs like drumsticks; the other was a large, able-bodied gentleman, with a red face and hooked nose. They exchanged two shots, one only of which—the second—took effect. It pastured upon their landlord’s spindle leg, on which he held it out, exclaiming, that while he lived he would never fight another challenge with his antagonist, ‘because,’ said he, holding out his own spindle shank, ‘the man who could hit *that* could hit *anything*.’”<sup>1</sup>

Most of the duels in the novels are the result of a hot word dropped by a gentleman “disguised” in drink and caught up by another gentleman in the same condition. Dozens of duels came about as did that fought by Hardress Cregan, the hero of Griffin’s *The Collegians*. Hardress Cregan, his father, and some friends, are spending a convivial evening together. Hardress proposes the health of an absent com-

<sup>1</sup> *Traits and Stories*, Vol. II, p. 6.

panion, Daly. One of his father's friends declares Daly an impertinent puppy and declines the toast. Hardress, heated by the evening's carouse, replies by discharging the contents of his wine-glass in the face of the offender. Nothing short of an exchange of shots can wipe out the insult. They agree to fight it out then and there. Hardress chooses one of the party for a second; and his father is requested to act in that capacity for his opponent. The principals are to take their places in opposite corners of the dining room, to approach step by step, and fire at pleasure. Hardress fires first, and misses. His opponent advances until the pistol muzzle touches the young man's brow. When the latter shows no fear, his opponent lowers his weapon and magnanimously waives his right to blow out his young friend's brains. This closes the incident. They shake hands; all close round the punch-bowl again; and harmony reigns once more.

An incident growing out of this occurrence indicates the recognized place of the duel in the routine of Irish life. The servants in the kitchen have just heard the pistol-shot in the dining room. The cook is speaking: —



“‘Run in to the gentlemen, Mike, eroo,’ she exclaimed, without even laying aside the candle, which she was paring with a knife, in order to make it fit the socket more exactly. ‘I lay my life the gentlemen are fighting a *jewel*.’

“‘It can’t be a *jewel*,’ said Mike, the servant-boy, who was courting slumber in a low chair before the blazing fire. ‘It can’t be a *jewel*, when there was only one shot.’

“‘But it isn’t far from ’em, I’ll be bail, till they’ll fire another if they do not be hindered ; for ’tis shot for shot with ’em. Run in, eroo.’

“The servant-boy stretched his limbs out lazily, and rubbed his eyes. ‘Well,’ said he, ‘fair play all the world over. If one fired, you wouldn’t have the other put up with it, without havin’ his fair revinge?’

“‘But maybe one of ’em is kilt already!’ observed Nancy.

“‘E’then, d’ye hear this? Sure you know well, that if there was anybody shot, the master would ring the bell.’

“This observation was conclusive. Old Nancy proceeded with her gloomy toil in silence, and the persuasive Mike, letting his head hang back from his shoulders, and crossing his hands upon his lap, slept soundly on, undisturbed by any idle conjecture on the cause of the noise which they had heard.”<sup>1</sup>

A very prevalent form of lawlessness was the illicit distillation of whiskey, and the running

<sup>1</sup> Griffin’s *The Collegians*, p. 131.

of unlicensed whiskey shops all over the country. These shebeen shops, as they were called, were everywhere centres of demoralization, and were considered to be one of the most powerful of all the influences that were sapping the morals of the nation. The peasants took to the illicit distillation for different reasons. The profits, barring contingent losses, were large. Adventurous spirits liked to defy the law, and war with gaugers, excisemen, and revenue officers. Not the least potent incitement to the traffic was the enthusiastic devotion to the national drink. The public at large, too, found the mountain-dew vastly superior in flavor to the liquor that had been sounded by the gauger's rod. To distil whiskey after a fashion required no great skill, though the best results could only be obtained by professors of the art who combined talent and experience. This illicitly distilled whiskey was called by the affectionate diminutive, "poteen." The demoralizing effects of the distiller's trade become clear from the pictures of the life of the practitioners of it given in the novels. The best of the pictures of the Irish moonshiners is in Carleton's *Emigrants of Ahadarra*. Parts of the action of this story are laid in a cavern used as

a still-house. The mysteries of the trade are explained — still, head, and worm, and the process of distillation from the manipulation of the malt to the running of the warm stream of perfect liquor from the eye of the still. The moonshiner himself and his womankind become old acquaintances — a hard, lawless lot they appear. Patrons of the still and visitors come and go — now the squireen, it may be, whose money backs the enterprise; now a party of countrymen to purchase a keg for a wedding; now a group of rustic hard-goers sleeping off the effects of over-stimulation in a corner; or perhaps the shebeen-house man makes his appearance to negotiate for his stock; or a straggler to beg a bottle or a drink on trust. Perhaps on another occasion the hedge-schoolmaster, an honored guest, visits the still-cavern and keeps it ringing with the laughter that answers his jests. With his naturally frisky wits stimulated to the last degree by quantities of the native in its pristine purity and strength, he is haranguing a half-drunken, but wholly appreciative audience with bursts of drollery and sallies of the wildest fun, in which a homely mother-wit quaintly mingles with mock heroics, Vergilian and Horatian quo-

tations, and miscellaneous pedantries in the true hedge-schoolmaster vein.

The gauger, of course, was the arch-enemy of all this illicit business, and the gauger outwitted has very frequently a part to play upon the stage of these novels. In the popular mind the gauger was the embodiment of all that was hateful and villanous, a malignant being whose mission was to war with human happiness at large. He was the still-hound who relentlessly tracked out and dried up at their sources the streams of poteen that flowed so gratefully from their mountain springs.

Carleton's *The Squanders of Castle Squander* contains one of the many amusing incidents that illustrate the gauger's fortunes. A festive squire is entertaining a jolly company at dinner. A servant whispers that the gauger, with soldiers at his back, is without. The visitation is unseasonable. Guests are present; and, worse yet, three fresh kegs of mountain-dew stand in a row by the dining-room wall. The squire consults with his huntsman, a man of expedients. The huntsman is reassuring; bids him bring the gauger in to join the company for a while, and all will be well. The

advice is followed. The gauger is warmly greeted, brought in to dinner, and urged to let his business stand over to the end of the meal. Meanwhile the huntsman and a corps of assistants repair to the cellar. Holes are bored through the floor under the kegs, and through the bottoms of the kegs themselves. The precious liquor is then drawn off in small vessels and hidden about the grounds. Dinner over, the gauger proceeds to inspect the kegs. To his surprise and chagrin they prove empty. The crestfallen officer departs, and the country-side is the richer by a joke on the common enemy.

Gaugers were not all as inconsiderate as he who interrupted the festivities at Castle Squander. The country gentleman and the gauger were often hand and glove. A guest at the house of a Mayo gentleman (the incident is from *Wild Sports of the West*) tells of a case in point. Knowing his host's cellars to be well stocked with poteen, he is alarmed one morning at the sight of a score of revenue police drawn up before the door, and anxiously consults his host's old butler:—

“‘John,’ said I, in a masonic whisper, ‘are we safe?’—‘Safe! from what, Sir?’—‘The

gauger.' — 'Lord, Sir! he dines with us.' — 'But — but is there any *stuff* about the house?' — 'Any! God alone can tell how much there is above and under.' — 'If anybody told the gauger, John —' — 'They would only tell him what he knows already. The gauger! — Lord bless you, Sir, he never comes or goes without leaving a keg or two behind him. If the master and he did not pull well together, what the devil business would we have here? Don't mind, Sir; we know what we are about: <sup>1</sup> *Tiggum Tigie Thigien!*' " <sup>2</sup>

In Ireland, where race and religious antagonisms coincided, and where privilege depended upon creed, the religious question had great prominence. The novels naturally reflect it. Priests and friars, the clergy of the Established Church, and dissenting parsons are recurring types.

With respect to their training the priests are of two classes, the first made up of those who, at a time when Irish Catholics could get no education, or later from choice, were prepared in the seminaries of France and Spain, and the second of those who were educated at home in the hedge-schools, at Maynooth, or elsewhere. This educational stamp dividing the two classes is always clearly discernible.

<sup>1</sup> An Irish proverb — "Tim understands Teddy."

<sup>2</sup> *Wild Sports of the West*, p. 27.



In character and manners the priests ranged all the way from the type of elegant French ecclesiastic, polished out of all resemblance to his Irish brethren, of whom the Abbé O'Flaherty of Lady Morgan's *O'Briens and O'Flahertys* is a representative, to the slovenly, home-bred hedge-priests careless of church duties, whom Bishop Doyle did so much to reform into ways proper to the dignity of their calling.

Many of the priests who appear in the novels are boisterous convivialists. Such is the Father Malachi Brennan of *Harry Lorrequer*. He is introduced presiding at a supper in his own house, where, as the punch goes round, the fun grows fast and furious, to change later into a fighting humor that turns the festivity into a *mêlée*, in which the floor is covered with struggling combatants, and the air full of flying missiles. The priest is the soul of the entertainment, singing drinking songs, and regaling the company with stories, among others one that turns upon the striking resemblance between the gossoons that swarm from the neighboring cabins and the curate who does the honors at the far end of the table.

If the reader will believe the officer of the

North Cork, who in *Harry Lorrequer* tells a story of life in the neighborhood of Maynooth, the faculty of that seminary had its share of priests of the same sort—tipplers and card-players:—

“Many of the professors were good fellows that liked grog fully as well as Greek, and understood short whist, and five-and-ten quite as intimately as they knew the Vulgate or the Confessions of St. Augustine. They made no ostentatious display of their pious zeal, but whenever they were not fasting or praying, or something of that kind, they were always pleasant and agreeable; and, to do them justice, never refused by any chance an invitation to dinner—no matter at what inconvenience.”

Father Jos of Miss Edgeworth's *Ormond* is a similar person. He spent his evenings with King Corny over pipes, punch, and cards, and manifested his religious zeal by a hatred of the privileged heretics, and a declared conviction of the unhappy state that awaits them in the hereafter.

Maxwell's priests are of the same convivial type. Father Andrew, of *Wild Sports of the West*, is the bottle-companion of the sportsmen who after a hard day's hunting put in a hard night's drinking. No coquetry was necessary

to persuade him to fill his glass, no remonstrances touching "heel-taps and skylights." Manus Blake in *Captain Blake* finds no higher praise for the parish priest than that he is a man you could drink with in the dark.

Sporting priests with a strong taste for the turf and the hunt also appear. There was no inconsiderable number of these at the end of the eighteenth and opening of the nineteenth century. The black cloth and clerical boots rode neck-and-neck with the scarlet coats, and "Tally Ho!" was in their mouths as often as "Pax Vobiscum." The priest in Lover's *Rory O'More* is of this ilk. He loves, as Rory says, to "take a dart after the hounds." The Father Tom Loftus of *Jack Hinton* is both sporting priest and convivialist. When Hinton meets him on the boat *en route* to Loughrea, he finds him deep in a game of cards with a farmer, maintaining at the same time a heated religious controversy with a Quaker, and a very gallant conversation with a lady, and, under the inspiration of repeated hot tumblers, conducting the triple campaign like a general. A few words from Father Tom's conversation, addressed now to his opponent at cards, now to the Quaker, now to the

lady, will serve to bring Lever's favorite type of priest before the reader:—

“‘There ye go, six of spades. Play a spade, av ye have one, Mr. Larkins—For a set of shrivelled up craytures, with nothing but thee and thou for a creed, to deny the real ould ancient faith that Saint Peter and—the ace of diamonds; *that* tickled you under the short ribs—not you, Mrs. Carney—for a sore time you have of it; and an angel of a woman ye are; and the husband that could be cruel to you, and take—The odd trick out of you, Mr. Larkins. No, no, I deny it—*nego in omnibus, Domine*. What does Origen say? The rock, says he, is Peter; and if you translate the passage without—Another kettleful, if you please. I go for the ten, Misther Larkins. Trumps! another—another—hurroo! By the tower of Clonmacnoise, I’ll beggar the bank to-night. *Malheureux au jeux heureux en amour*, as we used to say formerly. God forgive us!’

“With these words, the priest pushed the cards aside, replenished the glasses, and began the following melody to an air much resembling Sir Roger de Coverley.

“‘To-morrow I’ll just be three score;

May never worse fortune betide me,

Than to have a hot tumbler before,

And a beautiful crayture beside me.

If this world’s a stage, as they say,

And that men are the actors, I’m certain,

In the after-piece I'd like to play,  
And be there at the fall of the curtain.  
Whack ! fol lol.

“ ‘No, no, Mrs. Carney, I'll take the vestment on it, nothing of the kind — the allusion is most discreet — but there is more.

“ ‘For the pleasures of youth are a flam ;  
To try them again, pray excuse me ;  
I'd rather be priest that I am,  
With the rites of the church to amuse me.  
Sure there's naught like a jolly old age,  
And the patriarchs knew this, it said is ;  
For though they looked sober and sage,  
Faith they had their own fun with the ladies !  
Whack ! fol lol.’ ”<sup>1</sup>

That is Father Tom the convivialist. As sportsman it is this reverend gentleman who backs Hinton's horse to win in the steeple-chase, rides over the course with him, and tells him knowingly how the obstacles should be approached and surmounted.

With these convivial and sporting priests the gentry had a point of contact ; they stood upon the common ground of similar tastes ; and it is natural that these should be the types of Catholic priests to appear most frequently in the pages of the novelists of the gentry. With

<sup>1</sup> *Jack Hinton*, p. 55.

the priests of the better sort the gentry novelists do not appear well acquainted; now and then one is introduced as a kind of perfunctory acknowledgment, it would seem, that such characters existed. Occasionally a self-respecting, orderly, benevolent Roman clergyman may be seen dining perhaps with the lord of the soil and the Established Church rector. They appear but seldom, however. It is to the novelists of the peasantry that one must go for convincing pictures of the priests. The tippling, hunting priests of the novelists of the gentry are not quite feasible; incompatible qualities are brought together in them, and form a combination that is against the truth of nature. Their good priests are generally shadowy and conventional. It is in the stories of Carleton and of his brother novelists of the peasantry that the true priests are to be met.

Carleton, like Lever and others, introduces convivial priests; he too combines in them seemingly incompatible qualities; but Carleton makes a blend of which neither Lever nor his fellows had the secret, a vital product, a genuine transcript of a national type that flourished when he himself was a boy. The priests in



*Shane Fadth's Wedding* and in *The Station* may be taken as representatives of one class. They are burly, large-bodied, cordial, kindly fellows, with overwhelming animal spirits, immense hungers and thirsts, and an inordinate love for the pleasures of the table that showed itself on the rare occasions when anything like luxuries were within reach. They overflowed with a wild wit that played with everything in heaven and earth, and on feasts and festivals, stimulated with poteen, they poured over the company a flood of humor and drollery, quips and gibes, banter and pungent satire, that swept everything irresistibly along with it. They eschewed undue seriousness; they unbent readily; neither profession nor creed could shackle or stiffen their warm humanity. Serious thoughts were, at merrymakings, thrust aside to give place to more or less harmless revelry and festivity. They seemed on easier terms with their Maker than their heretic brethren, who lived as in a taskmaster's eye. Their religious devotion was so hearty and unquestioning that they had no fear that a jest, even on sacred matters, would be taken amiss. "Begging your pardon, we'll have nothing more about the Bible," says

the priest in the *The Station* to the Protestant who, as the fun was beginning, sought to draw him into an untimely religious controversy. "We can't always carry long faces like Methodist parsons. . . . Come, . . . let the Bible take a nap, and give us a song."<sup>1</sup>

There was nothing of the hypocrite about these men ; they were not ascetics, to be sure, but if they loved food and drink and fun, were shrewd, and had an eye to the main chance, they had also an honest faith, stood up for it stanchly, were kind, helpful, generous, and on the whole performed their duties with faithfulness. The difference between Lever's convivial priests and Carleton's lies in this : the innuendoes of speech and the general behavior of Lever's priests are inconsistent with the professionally honest man, while Carleton's priestly convivialists, in the height of their excesses, even in the most unbridled and audacious sallies of poteen-inspired wit, whether sober or "half gone," are, in their sentiments, moral, sound, and honest ; they somehow contrive always to maintain a professional air, and even when the host must steady their homeward

<sup>1</sup> *Traits and Stories*, Vol. I, p. 195.

steps, can cover themselves decently with some shreds and patches of clerical dignity.

At the opposite extreme from these convivial priests stand the Father Roche of *Valentine M'Clutchy*, Banim's Father Connell, and their like. They are guileless men, of pious, dutiful lives, who move about in works of charity. They are peacemakers, stepping in between members of their flock and a murderous vengeance, or between the Whiteboys and their victim, or reconciling hostile factions. Nor are they meek and humble men only, but of heroic mould too, when the occasion calls. It is this type of priest that inspired Banim's popular ballad, so full of fire and feeling, *Soggarth Aroon* (Priest dear) : —

“Who, in the winter's night,  
    *Soggarth Aroon*,  
When the cold blast did bite,  
    *Soggarth Aroon*  
Came to my cabin door,  
And, on the earthen floor,  
Knelt by me sick and poor,  
    *Soggarth Aroon?*

“Who, on the marriage day,  
    *Soggarth Aroon*,  
Made the poor cabin gay,  
    *Soggarth Aroon?*

And did both laugh and sing,  
Making our hearts to ring,  
At the poor christening,  
*Soggarth Aroon?*

“Who, as friend only met,  
*Soggarth Aroon,*  
Never did flout me yet,  
*Soggarth Aroon?*  
And when my heart was dim  
Gave, while his eye did brim,  
What I should give to him,  
*Soggarth Aroon?*

“Och, you and only you,  
*Soggarth Aroon,*  
And for this I was true to you,  
*Soggarth Aroon;*  
In love they'll never shake,  
When for old Ireland's sake  
We a true part did take,  
*Soggarth Aroon!*”

Besides the kinds of priests already mentioned, there is a goodly company of rough-and-ready priests and curates, never wanting for a sharp word to an antagonist, and handy with fist or horsewhip to stop a fight at fair or market, admonish an unruly member, or clear out a riotous shebeen house.

Quite in contrast with the Catholic priests, half-educated, peasant-born for the most part,

and barely able to subsist upon such dues as they contrived to collect from a poverty-stricken peasantry, were the clergy of the Established Church, with their vested interest in the wealth of the Establishment which tended to breed a pride and arrogance that too often filled the room of faith and works. Most of the clergy in the novels are products of this tendency, and are introduced by way of satire upon the order. The Rev. Mr. Lucre of *Valentine M'Clutchy* is one of these. He is an absentee churchman. Holding a handsome living, he pays a curate a pittance to attend to his duties, visits his parish only occasionally, and lives in London or Dublin. This rector is a portly man, the mould of form, highly connected in England. He has a fine contempt for the vulgarity of Dissenters and for Irish priests. He clothes himself in purple and fine linen, fares sumptuously every day, and will be a bishop by and by. The Rev. Dr. Miller of *One of Them* is a variation of the same type. He is a bachelor with a small house furnished in the perfection of comfort, where everything from the careful disposal of a fire-screen to the noiseless gait of

the footmen shows that supervision and discipline prevail. His hobby is admirable little dinners, the *ne plus ultra* of social enjoyment, the company well chosen, the wines of the choicest, the viands devised and executed with a *gourmet's* finest taste. He finds his chief happiness in the consciousness of having done everything possible for the comfort of his guests, and in quietly watching their enjoyment and appreciation of his hospitality. A replica of the same portrait is the mellow-looking, well-cared-for vicar in *Sir Brooke Fosbrooke*, a perfect type of sociable old bachelorhood in its aspect of not unpleasant selfishness, set down by his acquaintances as "an excellent fellow, though not much of a parson." Still another type is the decorous Evangelical curate of *Roland Cashel*, who laments the prevalence in Ireland of the obscuring mists of Papist superstition and ignorance, deprecates the gambling and dissipations of the gentry, fascinates the ladies with his gentle ways and little sallies of pleasantry, and entertains them with talk of art and belles lettres.

At the opposite extreme from these ambitious, epicurean, and society rectors, vicars,



and curates, is the Vicar of Wakefield variety of parish clergyman, corresponding with the Roman Catholic priest, Father Roche, of Carleton, and the Father Connell of Banim. Of this last type, but with more of the student and thinker about him than commonly belongs to it, is the curate of the Rev. Mr. Lucre. He is a young man with a large family and a small salary, the latter allowed him by the rector. He feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, and cares for the souls of his parishioners. He is a student, and a liberal man, and is meant to represent the more spiritually minded of the clergy. Contrasting him with the rector, Mr. Lucre, Carleton remarks, that while the rector is worshipping the King in London and the lord-lieutenant in Dublin, the curate is only worshipping God in the country.

Of the few dissenting parsons who appear in these novels the character of the Rev. Mr. Sinclair, of *Jane Sinclair*, is presented in the fullest detail. The traits of his character are all estimable. He combined a zeal in the matter of faith and morals with a warm heart, and a practical habit of charity. Precept and practice went hand in hand with him. He had no

frailties, but walked in all the commandments of the Lord blameless. He was a rigid Calvinist; had a sharp eye to the spiritual welfare of his children; was ever ready and willing to point a moral and adorn a tale for their edification, planning, among other things, to deliver a course of lectures to the family circle on "the duties and character of women in the single and married state of life" for the consolation of his daughter when she was doubly distracted by an unhappy love affair and the monomania, induced by her father's favorite doctrine, that she was a "castaway" predestinated to eternal misery.

The dissenting parsons in the novels range between the type represented by Mr. Sinclair and the type already described in the Palatine parson of Griffin's *Coiner*, who differed from the epicurean clergymen of the Establishment chiefly by a generous infusion of cant and hypocrisy, and a satisfaction of his propensities for high living by an indulgence in beef and beer in place of venison and claret.

If dissenting parsons are few and far between, their flocks are well represented. But the Irish novelists on the whole refuse to take

the Dissenters seriously ; they are always presented in a medium of humor or satire. It is true that Carleton wrote with very solemn appreciation of Mr. Sinclair, with the best intentions of making him amiable and edifying, but there was some failure of sympathy, and the reverend gentleman, with his cant and sounding moralizations, turned out a venerable prig.

There was much material in the religious history of Ireland in the first quarter of the nineteenth century for satire, and Carleton, though recognizing the good in the characters and aims of all persuasions, was also a fierce satirist of them all. He struck a head wherever he saw one, and allowance must be made for this when he writes of the Dissenters. The hardest things said against the Dissenters are embodied in the person of Solomon M'Slime, the religious attorney of *Valentine M'Clutchy*, who makes it his business to cover M'Clutchy's villanies with the cloak of the law. He is an elder whose corner in the conventicle is vocal with amens, and whose lips ever drop with its jargon of cant phrases. He is sanctimonious and hypocritical, justifying his fifth tumbler of

punch on the ground that it gives unction in praise and prayer, and his advances to the barmaid of the tavern by arguing that they leave him with a vital sense of human sin and frailty.

When, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the movement for Catholic Emancipation grew in strength, a new fear of Catholicism sprang up among Protestants, and a Protestant movement—the New Reformation Movement it was called—was instituted. This was an attempt at the conversion of Papists on the grand scale carried on vigorously by the pulpit, the press, house-to-house visitations, and discussions in which Bible divines and Catholic priests took the platform and publicly wrangled over doctrinal questions—the usefulness of indiscriminate Bible reading, and so on—for the edification of mixed audiences of all persuasions. Multitudes fell victims to this zeal for proselytizing people of varying degrees of piety and sincerity, including a host of old women of both sexes. The arguments used in public and private seem to have been designed to establish the moral and intellectual superiority of Protestantism over the superstitious idolatry of Romanism. The assumption of in-

tellectual superiority on the part of addle-pated squires and pious evangelical lords, who knew nothing in particular of their own or any one else's religion, is very entertaining, and Carleton turns it to good comic advantage. But the New Reformers did not rely solely upon the strength of their arguments; they reënforced these with blankets, Bibles, and soup tickets gratuitously dispensed — tactics that met with considerable temporary success in famine years and hard winters.

Of converts from Romanism made by grace or pure reason none appears in the novels, and the converts who take a place in the stories are mainly of two kinds. M'Clutchy's papist bailiff Darby O'Drive, a shrewd, calculating, unprincipled, godless rascal, whose religion is all from the lip outward, represents one kind. He has resolved to turn Protestant, but is uncertain whether, in his particular circumstances, it will be to his advantage to yield to M'Slime's arguments and turn Presbyterian, or to Rev. Mr. Lucre's and become a member of the Established Church. He finally decides on the latter course, that by so doing he may secure a position as jailer. The second kind of converts is

of the meanest and most destitute of the peasantry, who, dreading winter hardships and famine, change their faith for the sake of blankets and provisions, until better times make it convenient to return to the bosom of their Church.

Some of the richest comic scenes of the novels grow out of this proselytizing movement. Among these scenes is that in which the bailiff, O'Drive, a fresh convert to Protestantism, meets on the highway Bob Beatty, a recent convert to Popery. They at once open an argument on the surest way to salvation, each attacking the creed he has just renounced. The discussion, of course, proceeds from a word to a blow. The laborers in the fields on either side of the road flock to the spot to learn the cause of the skirmish, and, finding a religious difference at the bottom of the trouble, they at once take sides. Not being posted up to date on the religious convictions of the combatants, the Protestants side with the convert to Catholicism, and the Catholics with the convert to Protestantism, and a party fight is in full swing before either side discover that the battle is being waged under a complete misapprehension of the true state of the case.



Another grotesquely comic scene is that in which the Rev. Mr. Lucre, Father M'Cabe, the Roman Catholic curate, Father Roche, the old priest, and Bob Beatty (the same who fought with O'Drive) figure. Bob Beatty is dying. His wife is a Protestant, and is determined her husband shall die a "true blue." She hurries off to fetch Mr. Lucre. The Catholic neighbors, eager to save Beatty's soul if possible, post off, some for Father Roche, and some for Father M'Cabe the curate. Mr. Lucre and Father M'Cabe, riding to Beatty's, meet on the road. Mr. Lucre spurs on to be first at the death-bed, and M'Cabe, resolving not to leave the care of Bob's soul to a heretic, spurs along beside him, and so they clatter on, cheek by jowl, in a kind of "holy steeplechase," as Carleton calls it. The peasantry, Catholic and Protestant, watch eagerly for the appearance of priest or parson. Soon priest and parson appear, sweeping down the road like a whirlwind, neck-and-neck. The peasantry grasp the situation, and shout encouragement as they dash past : —

“‘More power to you, Father M'Cabe ; give him the Latin and the Bravery [Breviary].’

“‘The true Church forever, Father M’Cabe, the jewel that you war! Give the horse the spurs, avourneen. Sowl, Paddy, but the *bodagh* parson has the advantage of him in the *cappul*. Push on, your reverence; you have the devil and the parson against you, for the one’s drivin’ on the other.’”

Or, —

“‘Success, Mr. Lucre! Push on, sir, and don’t let the Popish rebel send him out of the world with a bandage on his eyes. Lay in the Bible, Mr. Lucre! Protestant and True Blue forever — hurra!’

“‘Mr. Lucre, pull out; I see you’re hard up, sir, and so is your charger. Push him, sir, even if he should drop. Death and Protestantism before Popery and dishonor.’”<sup>1</sup>

Arrived dripping with perspiration at the dying man’s house, they both dismount and rush to the bedside. Mr. Lucre seats himself on one side the bed, M’Cabe on the other. Lucre seizes the dying man’s right hand, M’Cabe the left. Mr. Lucre charges him to keep the faith, and reminds him that to die a Papist will seal his everlasting punishment. M’Cabe promises him an eternity of suffering, if, after the explanations of the true church he

<sup>1</sup> *Valentine M’Clutchy*, pp. 321–322.

has received, he allows himself to relapse into heresy. Beatty remains non-committal, and only begs to be let alone. He will die, he declares, neither in Mr. Lucre's creed, nor in M'Cabe's. At this juncture the good Father Roche enters, and Beatty, saying, "I'll die a Christian," intrusts the care of his soul to Father Roche. Thereupon Mr. Lucre, rising, pronounces Bob *non compos mentis*, and departs declaring he shall be buried according to the rites of the Established Church.

Another ludicrous incident illustrates very truthfully the motives of one set of converts to Protestantism, made by the New Reformers. The rumor has gone abroad that the Rev. Mr. Lucre is prepared to give five guineas in cash to each convert who will "renounce the errors of the Church of Rome, and embrace those of the Church of England." As a result of the rumor, a baker's dozen of ragged, half-starved peasants straggle one after another to the rectory. They are candidates for conversion. It is a famine year, and they are all ready to become good Protestants until the new potatoes come in. The following are snatches of the conversation between the Rev. Mr. Lucre and

the would-be converts. Mr. Lucre is addressing one of them, Cummins by name : —

“ ‘Cummins, my good friend, allow me to set you right. We never give a penny of money to anyone for the sake of bringing him over to our church ; if converts come to us, it must be from conviction, not from interest.’

“ ‘I see, sir—but sure I’m not wantin’ the *promise* at all, your honor—sure I know you must keep yourselves clear anyway—only the five guineas a head that I’m tould is to be given.’

“ ‘Five guineas a head ! pray who told you so?’

“ ‘Faith, sir, I couldn’t exactly say, but every one says it. It’s said we’re to get five guineas a head, sir, and be provided for, after. I have nine o’ them, sir, eight crathurs and Biddy herself—she can’t spake English, but, wid the help o’ God, I could consthroe it for her. Faith, she’d make a choice Prodestan, sir, for wanst she takes a thing into her head, the devil wouldn’t get it out. As for me, I don’t want a promise at all, your reverence, barrin’ that it ’ud be plaisin’ to you, just to lay your forefinger along your nose—merely to show that we undherstand one another—it ’ud be as good to me as the bank. The crathur on the breast your reverence, we’d throw in as a luck penny, or *dhuragh*, and little Paddy we give at half price.’ ”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Valentine M’Clutchy*, pp. 227–228.

It is interesting to observe, in connection with this New Reformation Movement, the bearing of the peasant when under a fire of arguments directed against his creed, often by his betters in education. Rude and illiterate as he is, he shows a wonderful ingenuity and resource in blocking an argument, and silencing an opponent. Here is one instance of the many that might be adduced from the novels. A Protestant, in a controversy with a peasant over his faith, remarks : —

“‘And so, M’Rory, you are really such a superstitious blockhead as to believe in purgatory, are you?’

“‘I believe, sir,’ retorts the peasant, ‘in what my church bids me, and what my people believed before me; and what more does your honour, and the likes of you, do nor that? But, in troth, in respect of purgatory, sir, myself is no ways perticular; only, bad as it is, sure your honour may go further and fare worse for all that.’”<sup>1</sup>

Before the days of this New Reformation Movement, when Catholic Emancipation frightened the Protestants into a zeal for controversy and conversion, and set Protestants and Catho-

<sup>1</sup> Lady Morgan’s *O’Donnell*, p. 48.

lies by the ears, there was often good feeling, or at least toleration, and bigotry and bitterness slept. Maxwell illustrates this happy state of things by a story of the friendship of Father Patt Joyce and the Rev. Mr. Richard Carson, the Established Church rector. A peasant tells the story: —

“ ‘Och hone ! isn’t it a murder to see the clargy making such fools of themselves, now ! When I was young, priest and minister were hand and glove. It seems to me but yesterday, when Father Patt Joyce, the Lord be good to him ! lent Mr. Carson a congregation.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ ‘Everything went on beautiful, for the two clargy lived together. Father Patt Joyce minded his chapel and the flock, and Mr. Carson said prayers of a Sunday too, though sorrow a soul he had to listen to him but the clerk — but sure that was no fault of his.’ ”

The story then continues, explaining how the loan of the congregation was effected: —

“ ‘Well, in the evening, I was brought into the parlour, and there were their reverences as *cur coddigh*<sup>1</sup> as you please. Father Patt gave me a tumbler of *rael* stiff punch, and the divil a better warrant to make the same was within the province of Connaught. We were just as

<sup>1</sup> *Anglice*, comfortable.



comfortable as we could be, when a *currier*<sup>1</sup> stops at the door with a letter, which he said was for Mr. Carson. Well, when the minister opens it, he got as pale as a sheet, and I thought he would have fainted. Father Patt crossed himself. "Arrah, Dick," says he, "the Lord stand between you and evil! is there anything wrong?" "I'm ruined," says he; "for some *bad member* has wrote to the bishop, and told him that I have no congregation, because you and I are so intimate, and he's coming down to-morrow, with the *dane*, to see the state of things. Och, hone!" says he, "I'm fairly ruined." "And is that all that's frettin' ye?" says the priest. "Arrah, dear Dick" — for they called each other be their *cristen* names, — "is this all? If it's a congregation ye want, ye shall have a dacent one to-morrow, and lave that to me; — and now we'll take our drink, and not matter the bishop a fig."

"Well, next day, sure enough, down comes the bishop, and a great retinue along with him; and there was Mr. Carson ready to receive him. "I hear," says the bishop, mighty stately, "that you have no congregation." "In faith, your holiness," says he, "you'll be soon able to tell that," — and in he walks him to the church, and there were sitting threescore well-dressed men and women, and all of them as devout as if they were going to be anointed; for that blessed morning, Father Patt whipped mass over before ye had time to bless yourself, and

<sup>1</sup> Courier.

the clanest of the flock was before the bishop in the church, and ready for his holiness. To see that all behaved properly, Father Patt had hardly put off the vestments, till he slipped on a *cota more*,<sup>1</sup> and there he sat in a back *sate* like any other of the congregation. I was near the bishop's reverence ; he was seated in an arm-chair belonging to the priest. — "Come here, Mr. Carson," says he. "Some enemy of yours," said the sweet old gentleman, "wanted to injure you with me. But I am now fully satisfied." And turning to the dane, "By this book !" says he, "I didn't see a claner congregation this month of Sundays." ' ' ' ' <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A great-coat.

<sup>2</sup> *Wild Sports of the West*, p. 105.

## CHAPTER V

### LITERARY ESTIMATE

THE years that produced much of the work of Byron and Shelley, Wordsworth and Coleridge, Dickens and Thackeray, and Tennyson and Browning in England, and of Burns and Scott in Scotland, produced in Ireland the poetry of Moore, Mangan, Ferguson, and a few others, some political speeches, the work of the novelists here considered, and little beside. That Ireland in this period found no greater and no wider range of utterance is to be accounted for in part, no doubt, by the social misery that depressed her genius, and by the constant fever of political agitation that distracted it.

The Irish novelists, from a literary point of view, may be regarded as affiliating, each more or less completely, with one of three types.

Among the novelists of the gentry there are those who, on the whole, are much like the English in character and temperament ; English in their seriousness, steadiness, and common sense ; in their unemotional religious temper, untouched by passionate devotion or mystic enthusiasm ; in the zeal to preach, and moralize everything ; and English as strenuous "improvers," eager, to use the phrase Arnold applied to the Philistines, to "improve everything but themselves off the face of the earth." They have also the weakness of lapsing, at bad moments, into flatness and humdrum. Miss Edgeworth and Mrs. Hall are of this English type.

A second group, composed also of novelists of the gentry, are of the Anglo-Irish character and temperament. This group includes Lady Morgan, Maxwell, Lever, Lover, Croker, and perhaps Maturin and Grattan. It is curious to consider how the Anglo-Irish type, so distinct from the Anglo-Saxon and the Celtic, arose ; whether it was due to the occasional admixture of Celtic blood, to the merely external contact of the Saxon with the Irish Celt, or to establishment for a few generations upon Irish soil — to influences of climate and nature, bog and moun-

tain, the softer air, and the salt breath of the Atlantic. With the Anglo-Irish type literature has made the world more familiar than with the Celtic Irish, and it is perhaps from this peculiar kind of Irishman that people generally get their conception of the national character. This type is lacking in the romance and enthusiasm of the Celt, while keeping much of his mercurial nature, impetuosity, whimsicality, and eccentricity. In wit it is brilliant and boisterous, in humor broader. It is frank, high-spirited, dashing, but without the subtlety, the delicate sentiment, the fine shades of the Celtic nature. Like the Celtic nature it is impatient of reason and restraint.

The novelists of a third group are of the Celtic type of character and temperament, and embody in their own persons or in their books a good measure of the Celtic qualities. They are lively, expansive, emotional, self-willed, capricious, quick in the perception of the fitting and in the perception of the incongruous and absurd; and volatile, easily exalted and easily depressed to sadness and melancholy. Or as children of the mystic race of old Ireland they are full of tragic elements, of vindictiveness

and subtle cunning, of visionary faith and purity, and passionately religious, throwing about their faith something of the grace, the witchery, and the romance of the Celt. In this group belong the novelists of the peasantry — the Banims, Griffin, and Carleton.

A literary estimate of the Irish novelists begins naturally with Miss Edgeworth. Miss Edgeworth takes a place both in English and Irish fiction. As regards her place in English fiction, she, with Miss Burney, Miss Austen, and Mrs. Radcliffe, carried off the best share of the honors of novel-writing between Sterne and Scott. Each of these ladies, in one way or another, extended the field of fiction and was a source of new life. Miss Edgeworth was also one of three women — Miss Austen and Miss Ferrier are the other two — who in the first quarter of the nineteenth century wrote novels that embodied the same ideals, and treated of the everyday life of average humanity. Of these three last-named novelists Miss Edgeworth was the earliest, and represents a distinct step in the history of English fiction. Her Irish stories were the first to make a careful study of provincial life and



manners, and they did, in their degree, for Ireland what Miss Austen's novels did a little later for England, and Sir Walter Scott's for Scotland. Thus her stories become the progenitors of a countless family of similar productions. Sir Walter, in the General Preface to the *Waverley* novels, and in the Postscript to *Waverley*, acknowledged his indebtedness to Miss Edgeworth, and, if he may be taken entirely at his word, had from her the idea of doing for his country what she had done for Ireland.

Miss Edgeworth was also the first in English fiction to give careful and respectful attention to peasant life. In this respect she broke new ground that has since been worked in great detail by countless craftsmen of all nations. Testimony as to the extent of her influence comes from a distant source. An interview with Turgueneff, from the *London Times*, quoted in Mrs. Ritchie's account of Miss Edgeworth, represents him as asserting that it was her stories of Irish life that suggested to him the idea which subsequently bore fruit in his studies of the Russian peasant.

With Miss Edgeworth Irish fiction began.

Her *Castle Rackrent* was the first story to introduce English novel-readers to Irish life, to a new condition of society, a new set of manners, and a new range of character and emotion. Over Miss Austen, who had no new country to reveal, and nothing to tell that England did not already know, Miss Edgeworth had the advantages of the full charm of novelty, of a quaint and obscure region of odd manners and customs; and over Miss Ferrier, that she held undisturbed possession of her field, and did not see one far greater than herself, as Miss Ferrier saw Sir Walter, rise to overshadow her fame.

Not only had no novels, up to the appearance of *Castle Rackrent*, been devoted to the study of Irish life, but even Irish character had made only casual appearances in English literature. She entered then upon untrodden ground when she introduced her countrymen as they were in truth and reality. Her national tales caught with precision the devil-may-care tone of the life of the pre-Union gentry. The peasantry she heartily sympathized with as far as she understood them; she never patronized them, or treated them superciliously. She was,

nevertheless, unable to present the range and force of their feelings, or the subtle lights and shades of their nature — their fervent religious spirit, their superstitions, their melancholy, their tenderness, their touch of poetic sentiment, the depth to which their sorrow reached, their capacity for rapturous happiness.

Of Miss Edgeworth's literary merits *Castle Rackrent* is the best example. In point of style and general literary dexterity, none of her successors has surpassed it. This tale, short and unambitious, is still a masterly sketch, accurate and consistent. It is, as a novel of manners should be, compact of observation, and carries lightly upon a rapid current of narrative a quantity of curious and interesting information as to Irish manners, customs, and characters. It contains, also, in Old Thady, the steward, at once the most living and complete of all the people that move through Miss Edgeworth's stories, and one of the most subtly drawn and skilfully presented characters in the whole course of the Irish novel. He is interesting not only as an old Irish original, but as an exemplar of a perpetually recurring type of faithful retainer. All the characters of this

story are alive, too, even the minor ones, a thing that can be said generally only of the best novels. More in the way of characterization could not, it would seem, be accomplished in the same space than is done in *Castle Rackrent*. It is all of a piece and of unflagging inspiration. It has the charm of perfect unconsciousness. Here, for once, Miss Edgeworth loses herself absolutely in the story. Hers was a nature of charming prose, sprightly, intelligent, observant, brightened by humor, and warmed by kindly feeling. These traits show in the style and spirit of the book. It is full of wit and pathos, of bits of minute observation, and of vividly pictured situation. In style it is springy, alive with dialogue in the national manner, and told in language which, though almost without dialect, is yet in idiom and flavor racy of the soil. It will be sure of a permanent, if humble, place in English literature.

*The Absentee*, *Ennui*, and *Ormond*, though not equal to *Castle Rackrent*, are still brightly written, attractive, and interesting tales, with much skilful painting of manners, and light and telling social satire. *The Absentee* and *Ennui* are strong in narrative interest, and the plots effective from this point of view.

The bulk of Miss Edgeworth's stories and novels have to do with English life, the four Irish tales representing but a small part of her work in fiction. These last are, however, in her happiest and most original vein, most free from her characteristic faults of preaching and teaching, and likely to live a longer life outside the nursery and the schoolroom than her moral tales and English novels.

Mrs. Anna Maria Hall, as a moralizer even more facile and persistent than Miss Edgeworth, has, like her, the imperfect sense of the complexity of human motive that permits her complacently to solve the knottiest problems of human conduct by the application of a few simple moral laws. Irishmen, noting this didactic tendency, declared that such a "raisoner" must have English blood in her veins. Mrs. Hall, whether she writes of the gentry, or of the lights and shadows of peasant life, hardly ever escapes from the mediocre. The ground she covers has been covered by others with a fuller knowledge and deeper sympathy. Her work, with little or no distinction of form or style, has been supplanted.

Lady Morgan, with her hysterical sentimen-

talities and shrill satirical vehemence, is very different from Miss Edgeworth and Mrs. Hall, with their English propriety and restraint. Her pure romances, reflections of German romance in their gushing sentimentality and enthusiasm for clouds, waterfalls, and the moral sublime, stand without the scope of Irish fiction as exotic in conception, subject, and coloring. Her Irish stories, *The Wild Irish Girl*, *O'Donnell*, *Florence Macarthy*, and *The O'Briens and O'Flahertys* enjoyed a great vogue in their day, due almost altogether, it would seem, to the fact that she voiced liberal patriotic sentiment at the time of the Emancipation agitation, when Emancipators welcomed a champion, and government journals attacked acrimoniously everything tinged with Emancipation sympathies. Her books became a centre of political controversy. Every one read them. *The Wild Irish Girl* went through seven editions in two years. *The O'Briens and O'Flahertys*, in its satire and its romance, in its expression of patriotic sentiment, and in its pictures of Irish life, is the best of the national tales. These tales bid for popular favor by an incongruous combination of romantic interest and interest in the portrayal of



manners, with an element of social satire and a vein of patriotic sentiment. The romance in Lady Morgan's fiction is a kind of mawkish, sentimental vamping, that draws on no depth of feeling, and to which the reader of to-day will not patiently submit. The social satire, considering its source, is sharp and harsh in tone, and very bad-tempered. The best spots in Lady Morgan's novels are those in which the customs and characters of the lower Irish are delineated, or, to quote one of the amenities of her *Blackwood* critics, "She is more at home in painting the rude manners in which she was bred than those of the civilized countries into which she has intruded." There seems something contagious in the drolleries of the humble Irish out of which even the weakest of Irish stories can make capital. Lady Morgan caught them well, and presented them in the true Hibernian spirit. Country postilions, the "mine hosts" of the poteen houses, Dublin porters, drivers, and domestics she hit off to the life. Her satire of the gay side of the higher social life of Dublin is also spirited, and readable even to-day. Her patriotic sentiment has the ring of sincerity and enthusiasm, and

springs from a zealous hope for a united country where men of all persuasions could stand upon common ground.

In all that concerns literary craftsmanship Lady Morgan fails. There are clumsy, chaotic plots, and actions overburdened with antiquarian dissertations and political discussions. When a critic of the *London Quarterly*, referring to the style of her novels, recommended "the immediate purchase of a spelling-book and a pocket dictionary," he advised well, if not courteously. The style is not merely bad, but positively objectionable in its attempts at fine writing, its endless series of barbarisms and solecisms, and its sprinkling of French and Italian words that serve no better purpose than to display the author's acquaintance with those languages. Lady Morgan was a literary opportunist. Her novels, now only names, owed the vogue they enjoyed in their own day to the fact that they discussed questions of absorbing contemporary interest, rather than to any intrinsic literary merit.

It is English, not Irish, fiction that has the best claim to Charles Robert Maturin. His true place is not among these national novelists,

but in the school of Mrs. Radcliffe with the writers of tales of terror, among whom he belongs by virtue of his *Melmoth the Wanderer*, a romance of the true raw-head-and-bloody-bones variety that has now pretty well run its course to find a last refuge in the penny-dreadful. He finds a place as a novelist of Ireland through his *Women, or Pour et Contre*, a story which curiously combines sectarian animus with floods of romantic sentiment. Maturin's romances attracted Scott and Byron, and many critics have given them high, though qualified, praise. Bombastic extravagance of language, tangled plots, and impossible incidents characterize them all. A remarkable eloquence in descriptions of turbulent passion is his strong point.

If there is little of the Irishman in Maturin there is plenty in the tone of spirits, the love for the grotesque, the convivial and boisterously social bent, and the flavor of wit that characterize William Hamilton Maxwell. As the inventor of the rollicking novel he can lay claim to originality, and in this kind as well as in the novel of military life he is clearly the prototype of his co-worker, Charles Lever. In

the *Stories of Waterloo* Maxwell connected the thread of a fictitious narrative with the great events of the Napoleonic wars, as Lever did after him, and in these short tales, as in his longer novels, diversified the adventures in flood and field with love-making and convivialities in a manner whose influence is also clearly discernible in Lever's work. Lever's western squires, too, have a family resemblance to Maxwell's; and O'Malley's servant, the inimitable Mickey Free, is certainly a blood relation to Captain Blake's servant, Denis O'Brien. Lever also adopted and made quite his own Maxwell's favorite hero, the young Irish gentleman-soldier, with his bounding ambition, and mixture of recklessness, acuteness, jovial abandonment to pleasure, and fine fighting qualities. And the background of Maxwell's stories, as of Lever's best novels, is the wild life of the west of Ireland, and the riotous careers of its irrepressible, law-defying squires and squireens.

Maxwell, unsuccessful with his two historical novels, *O'Hara* and *The Dark Lady of Doona*, is at his best in *Wild Sports of the West* and *Captain Blake*. *Wild Sports of the West* is a genuine book, with life in it still. It is

imbued with the spirit of sport, and breathes the air of the woods and streams. Not its least attraction is the author's jaunty, offhand manner. He appears in print with an air as free and easy as though he were tramping the country with dog and gun. There is no suggestion of literary cant or punctilio. He writes as if for his own amusement, without effort or weariness, and in a style as good as is apt to be at the command of the "gentleman author." *Captain Blake* owes its charm to the vivid scenes from the life of the west, and to the gay, wild spirit which persistently regards life as a long frolic into which is to be crowded the greatest possible amount of sport and drink and fun.

Maxwell's friend, Charles James Lever, is an embodiment of the popular conception of the Anglo-Irishman. He is certainly un-English; he is quite as certainly Irish in his taste for sociability and conviviality, in his improvident recklessness, and in his love for boisterous practical joking. In the absence of serious emotion or subtlety in any direction, in being quite untouched by the romantic spirit, and a perfect stranger to the religious spirit, he was un-

Celtic. A voluminous author, he is not destined to be read in his completeness, and the criticism that classifies his books and indicates those that represent his talent and range of subject, will do him best service. In the composition of his novels, Lever used three kinds of material — Irish life, military life, and continental life. Often all three are combined in a single story. His novels may be conveniently classified according to the predominance of one or other kind of subject-matter. The best of the books that take their material chiefly from Irish life are perhaps *Harry Lorrequer*, *Charles O'Malley*, *Jack Hinton*, *The O'Donoghue*, *The Knight of Gwynne*, and *The Martins of Cro' Martin*.

The first three of these stand apart from the rest of Lever's work by their unflagging animal spirits and the buoyant, unreflective temper that pervades them from cover to cover. The reader who, without other sources of information, goes to these books for a faithful transcript of Irish life will, however, be disappointed. He will be troubled with doubts as to the possibility of modes of life such as these stories present, puzzled at the grotesque-



ness of things and people, and astonished at the extraordinary amount of uproar, riotousness, inebriety, and assault and battery. He will think himself in a world of farce and extravaganza. And the world of these stories is farcical and extravagant. Hence as novels of manners they are not what they might be. The point of contact with reality is too uncertain. They direct the eye, in presenting incidents and manners, to the strange, the grotesque, the whimsical, and the absurd. And character is similarly treated. Scrapes and adventures enough, for example, are laid at the door of one of the madcap heroes to diversify the lives of a score of roisterers. The incidents of the story were often true; the characters often copies of men that lived—for Lever's method, in spite of apparent unreality, is the realist's method of observation and reproduction—but a reckless disregard of perspective and atmosphere jumbles all together in a kind of farcical phantasmagoria. Yet however unlike reality, however uncertain the points of contact with it may be, there always are points of contact. The materials for this peculiar kind of extravaganza were to be found

nowhere but in Ireland ; and though the stories distorted the face of Irish life, they were true to the temper of a particular class and a particular period, and to the characteristics of certain national types. The subalterns met nowadays at dances and drawing-rooms are not Lorrequers and O'Malleys, but these characters were in their traits, impulses, and motives, a fairly close literary expression for a certain kind of young Irish gentleman soldier of a bygone day.

In structure these stories are alike. In the first few chapters the hero falls in love ; in the last few the arrangements for the marriage are completed. The love-affair is merely a thread upon which countless anecdotes are strung, as Poe, in his bad-tempered review, remarks, "with about as much method, and half as much dexterity as we see ragged urchins employ in stringing the kernels of nuts." That part of the story between the falling in love and the marriage arrangements is filled in with fox-hunts, steeplechases, practical jokes, after-dinner quarrels, duels, military adventures, and perhaps a peninsular campaign.

Lever's style is fly-away and harum-scarum,

not merely as compared with the great masters of style, but as compared with practitioners in his own class, like Miss Edgeworth and Croker. But for all that the style is alive. It is quite equal to disposing creditably of the matter in hand. His tales, told in the breezy, straightaway fashion of a good raconteur, have the quality of the spoken, rather than the written, word.

By his first three novels Lever clearly belongs to the school of Smollett, and there is, in their lives and works, a curious parallel between the two men. Both wrote prescriptions as well as comic novels. Tory tendencies tinge the work of both. They both put their own and their friends' adventures into their books. Both were connected with Tory journals. Both wrote at top speed and hated revision. Both loved to present extravagantly comic originals, and both introduced military life, noisy, riotous scenes, and practical jokes. But though the lives and works of the two men coincide in many ways, Lever is not a disciple of Smollett's. There is nothing to show that he modelled his work, in style or manner, upon his predecessor. Coincidence, not imitation,

accounts for the resemblance. Indeed Lever is nothing if not original. There has been nothing quite like him before or since. He shows no traces of imitation of any other humoristic writer either in general method or tricks of verbal humor. *Lorrequer*, *O'Malley*, and *Hinton*, in particular, have all the charm of spontaneity, unaffectedness, and perfect ease. There is no struggle to say smart things; no straining for effect. These three novels are the product of the prime of the author's vigor, and overflow with his most exuberant humor. There is a vital quality about them, a tone of spirits not to be simulated, that will destine them for a long time to come to some sort of remembrance, and will certainly give them a longer life than the later stories, which, though freer from technical failings, lack this *vivida vis*. It is to these first three of Lever's novels only that a reader (other than a student of the manners of the past) will be likely to return. The salt of fun and the zest of life are in them. They reflect the high spirits and careless gayety of the author's own youth, when his eyes were fixed upon the sunnier prospects of life.

After *Jack Hinton* a change came over Lever's

work. All the novels that followed, in spite of occasional outbreaks of noise and farce, were marked by a graver tone, and a more serious way of regarding life. *Tom Burke* (1844) first showed this tendency, and *Roland Cashel* (1850) represents another decided step in the direction of gravity and seriousness. *Phil Fogarty*, by *Harry Rollicker*, Thackeray's travesty of Lever, was in part responsible for the change. It completely exposed the extravagant nonsense of Lever's gasconading military heroes, and reduced the rollicking style to absurdity. Though Lever took Thackeray's joke in good part, the parody staggered him; he winced under it; was not ready to lay himself open to a repetition of it; and never after let himself go on at length in quite the same unrestrained vein.

The *Knight of Gwynne*, *The O'Donoghue*, and *The Martins of Cro' Martin*, the books, after *Hinton*, selected as representative of Lever's work upon Irish materials, are far more reliable as novels of manners than the earlier stories. The coloring is lowered to the tone of real life, and things go on in these stories much as they do in the real world. *The Knight of Gwynne*,

for instance, is a close transcript of the ways and means adopted by the English government in bribing the Irish members to vote their own Parliament out of existence; and *The Martins of Cro' Martin* is a true enough picture of the courses by which the fatuous pride and obstinacy of the gentry alienated the peasantry from them, and of the rude manner in which the gentry were shaken out of the dream that they ruled by divine right. Besides the tendency toward seriousness in the outlook upon life, and the greater faithfulness to reality, the stories after *Hinton* show a change in the personnel of the novels. Grave, lovable, attractive, thoughtful people, as well as the whimsical and extravagant, appear in the stories. A growing attention to the mechanism of the novelist's art is observable also, though unhappily the heyday of the author's imaginative force was past before he began to attend to it. These later stories have plots, too; and their style, as distinguished from the style of the earlier stories, is that of an author who takes some thought of how, as well as of what, he writes.

As a military novelist Lever's strongest



claims to a foremost place are based upon portions of *O'Malley* and *Hinton*, and upon *Tom Burke*. In the first two *O'Malley* and *Hinton* carry their Irish manners into a Peninsular campaign. In the intervals between battles and the leading of forlorn hopes, the gormandizing, drinking, duelling, dancing, and practical joking go on in the same old way. *Tom Burke* has plenty of desperate fighting, but without the frolic and genteel rowdyism. In the story of military life, as in the rollicking novel, Maxwell led the way for Lever. But Lever's pictures of military life in the barrack, in the camp, and in the battle-field surpassed and superseded those of his forerunner.

In English literature Lever takes his place among the secondary novelists of the middle of the nineteenth century. Among the Irish novelists he is the most complete representative of the Anglo-Irish spirit, at least of a phase of it. His heroes and heroines and most of the notable personages of his story are Anglo-Irish. His sympathies with other types of character and other ways of life were imperfect. His imagination never enabled him to see with the eyes of the Catholic gentry or of the peasantry. He

knew only one class of peasants well — servants and retainers, and he only knew them on the side they turned out to their masters. Most of his peasants are more than half stage Irishmen. Lever loved best to depict the kind of gentry of which the Encumbered Estates Act cleared the land, men who, like himself, were childish in their demand for lifelong amusement, and made a virtue of ruinous follies. Endless sociability, showers of wit, hilarity, and high tides of wine went to the make-up of his ideal world. His philosophy of life was thin, and a correct critical estimate of Lever's literary standing underlies the remark of Maginn : —

“We had rather borrow money to drink with the author of *Charles O'Malley*, than get drunk at the costliest expense of any other scribbler in the light brigade of flimsy literature.”<sup>1</sup>

But after all is said, Lever has written books that are clean, and fresh, and gay. In them he has raised a monument to the joys to be had from fun and good company, food, drink, and physical well-being. His work, as a whole, and his life reveal an upright, hearty, high-

<sup>1</sup> *Fraser's Magazine*, October, 1840, p. 330.

spirited, aimless, careless, generous nature, and the contact with it is both a pleasure and a refreshment.

Thomas Crofton Croker, by a tendency to humorize whatever he touches, belongs to the family of Maxwell and Lever. He does not take his fairies, goblins, and elves seriously. In his patronizing attitude toward them, in his vein of romantic feeling which just misses the genuine touch of awe, he is a sceptical outsider, not one of those from whose imaginations the fairies sprang, nor one in complete sympathy with them. In telling his legends and tales, Croker was faithful to the simple form in which they were told to him. Hence their value from the point of view of folk-lore. The copious notes, with the explanatory matter and comparisons of the Irish tales with those of other countries, add materially to the interest of the book. The brogue, which has even in print a mellifluous quality, and can be rendered with so large a measure of success on paper, is seldom used, and is missed. Though Croker almost entirely dispenses with the brogue, he is an easy master of the idioms and figurative language of the people. But faithful as he is to his originals

in form and idiom, his stories have often an artificiality of treatment entirely out of keeping with the primitive simplicity of his matter. It is a shock, for example, to be informed that what old John Mulligan<sup>1</sup> thought fairies are after all only a clump of mushrooms; or that Paddy<sup>2</sup> finds his dancing fairies in red caps and green jackets to be nothing but the green leaves and red bunches of haws waving and shaking in the moonlight; or to be told that every other tale has its origin in a drunken fancy—that the narrator had taken “just *one* drop too much,” or that he woke with the bottle *empty* beside him. A like objection on the score of artificiality might be made to the quotations from the English poets which are introduced in descriptive passages. But after all deductions are made, the *Fairy Legends* are charming, and at their best simply exquisite. Even those whom fairy tales do not attract cannot fail to enjoy the Irish human nature that gives substance to the spirit-world, and the pictures of manners, fascinating from the sheer skill of imitation.

<sup>1</sup> *Fairy Legends*, “Fairies or no Fairies.”

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, “The Harvest Dinner.”

The first work of Samuel Lover, *Legends and Stories of Ireland*, is, except for the insertion of tales of everyday life, very like Croker's *Fairy Legends and Traditions*, and was probably suggested by the latter book. In distinction from Croker, Lover wrote always in the idioms and brogue of the peasant, of which he was a thorough master, and upon which he relied largely for effect. In the *Legends and Stories* the distinctive qualities of Lover's fiction — delicate humor and tenderness in a mist of poetic sentiment — first make their appearance. All these qualities are in evidence in his first novel, *Rory O'More*. Here Lover makes the most effective use of the three elements of peasant life of which he had an easy, if superficial command — rustic pleasantry, rustic love, and domestic affection. *Rory O'More* had clearly the purpose of removing the predisposition of Englishmen to look upon the Irish peasant as a mass of savage turbulence and coarseness. The renovation went a step too far. There is too much averting of the gaze from the rougher and homelier side of the medal, and too much emphasis upon surface pleasantness and gayety. Unhappily for Lover, he is best known by his

*Handy Andy*, in which the tender sentiment and graceful frolicking humor that give *Rory O'More* its charm are no longer pervasive. Lover here caters to the taste for burlesque and clownish horse play, and presents a type of the pure stage Irishman of the buffoon variety. To keep the reader on the broad grin from cover to cover, not to present a real peasant type, is clearly the aim of the novel. No self-respecting peasant can like this clumsy distortion of his nature; and the reader who wishes to meet in fiction the true peasant will put the book impatiently aside.

In point of style Lover's work is commonplace. In point of constructive skill it has a full share of the imperfection that belongs to the plots of most of the Irish novelists, *Handy Andy* in particular being no more than a collection of more or less droll anecdotes. As a poet Lover is far less than Moore; as a novelist far less than Lever. As an Irish critic has somewhere said, — "The difference between Lever and Lover is just the difference between good whiskey and bad: both are indigenous, and therefore characteristic, but let us be judged by our best."



*omit* William Maginn, the uncompromising Tory, animated by the strongest feelings of an Orangeman, is a prime example of the wild Anglo-Irishman, both in his career and in his stories, which present only roisterers and swaggerers. He had natural abilities of a high order — a brilliant and vigorous intellect, critical acumen, and sound sense; and his writings everywhere give evidence of genius and of the wide range of his learning. His work has all the drawbacks incident to, if not inevitable in, work done, as his was, in the intervals of carouse, and for ephemeral purposes. It has, too, in full measure the peculiar charm that belongs to trifles from the pen of brilliant men of learning and great gifts. It has also the charm of a distinctively Irish product — a wit that stops at nothing and always takes the unexpected turn, a fantastic humor, and wild gayety, with now and again a touch of pathos. The Irish bent for conviviality is everywhere in his work, and the aroma of spirits exhales from every page. In *Bob Burke's Duel with Ensign Brady*, Maginn has written a tale than which no "rattling Hibernian tale" rattles louder, and nowhere, unless it be in Ferguson's

*Father Tom and the Pope*, is the Irish fancy in the full career of its wildest drolleries to be seen to better advantage.

The earliest of the Celtic group of writers were John and Michael Banim. The two brothers were closely associated in their literary work and mutually indebted for criticism and suggestion. John, the younger, had the more decided talent. He was guide and counsellor to Michael, and it was he who took the initiative in their joint literary enterprises.

Of John Banim's stories, *Peter of the Castle* and *The Mayor of Wind Gap*, it need only be said that, relying for effect partly upon romantic incident, partly upon manners-painting of both peasant and gentle life, they excel in neither. *The Last Baron of Crana*, and *The Conformists*, the former a semi-historical novel, have little merit besides that which attaches to them as illustrations, in the way of moderately interesting fiction, of the working of the penal laws. *John Doe*, and *The Nowlans*, by John Banim, *Crohoore of the Bill-Hook*, *The Croppy*, and *Father Connell*, by Michael Banim, are the tales and novels that best represent the brothers

as novelists of peasant life. These works combine graphic realistic powers with a gloomy and unlovely romantic spirit which delights in sensational incident, overstrained excitement, and fevered, high-pitched passion. In John Banim's *The Nowlans* there are impressive and powerful scenes which neither of the brothers has equalled elsewhere. The central situation is grasped and presented with a convincing reality, and is doubtless, in the perfervid passion of the young hero for the girl above him in station, in part the story of the author's ill-regulated and unhappy passion for the love of his youth. The structure of the story is lamentably slovenly. But it is a story informed with tenderness, passion, and power. With these qualities it is to be regretted that the shaping hand of the artist was wanting to express them in a coherent and harmonious form. *Father Connell*, written by Michael Banim, received additions at the hands of John. As a novel it is dull ; but as a faithful picture of a Roman Catholic priest in his home, and in his relations with his flock, not without interest.

Michael and John each wrote an historical novel. John Banim's *The Boyne Water*, the

author's most elaborate effort, is obviously an imitation of Sir Walter. But it lacks the magic by which the Wizard of the North conjured the past into a life, real, at least, if not quite its own. The author's imagination here proved unequal to his great task, and the book shows throughout the stiffness of a mechanical product in which the material did not become plastic to the touch. Besides this radical defect, the political discussions brought into the story clog the movement of the narrative; and the action is overlaid and obscured by masses of dead historical detail, and ineffective, irrelevant incident. The battle-pieces of the story, however correct from the military point of view, lack the battle-rage and stirring trumpet note of the struggle between the hosts of William and James. And the motives that spurred the combatants are not poured through the story — the Protestants burning to get the Catholics under their feet, and the Catholics aflame with loyalty to a King of their own faith, eager to turn the tables upon their oppressors, and get back the lands torn from them by Cromwell. There is more of the fighting spirit under the frieze coats and beneath the brandished shille-

lachs of Carleton's *Battle of the Factions* than in all the clashing hosts of *The Boyne Water*.

Michael Banim's historical novel, *The Croppy*, was made from material close at hand — the Rebellion of '98 — of which he heard from the lips of men still living. With all the artistic failings of *The Boyne Water* it still abounds in scenes imaginatively handled; it catches the temper of the antagonists in the struggle; and leaves the reader with impressions of certain phases of the Rebellion that have in them something like the vividness of a personal experience. The subject of *The Croppy* demanded less of its author than was demanded by the great events included in the scope of *The Boyne Water*. Though the latter is a far more careful and elaborate performance, the former has a movement and spirit that make it the more readable of the two.

In the style of these two writers, and in the way they handle their material, there is a curiously close resemblance. In John Banim there is perhaps a more marked tendency, resulting doubtless from his physical infirmities, toward feverish and overstrained passion, but on the whole it would be impossible to distinguish in

the work of the brothers, on merely internal evidence, the part for which each was responsible.

The work of the Banims gives no indication of the possession of artistic sense in its authors. Their style is remarkable only for a rude and irresistible eloquence in certain passages ; for the rest it is uncouth and loose. The Banims were most successful when they dealt with peasant life. Their pictures of high life were failures. The sensational and melodramatic element was strong in them. They tend more than any other of the Irish novelists to a presentation of turbulent and unchastened passion. They lack the creative power, the strong feeling, the rich humor of Carleton, and the vein of delicate sentiment and graceful poetry of Griffin.

Gerald Griffin, who took his cue in fiction from the Banims, went for the material of his novels and tales chiefly to the peasant life and middle-class life of his own day and a generation earlier, to the historic past, and to ancient Irish legend. Of the shorter stories of Irish life *Card Drawing*, *The Coiner*, *The Aylmers of Bally-Aylmer*, and *The Rivals* are the best. Griffin's brief remakings of Irish legend, and



his brief tales of the supernatural, despite their grace, lack the final touch of excellence that might have kept them still current. The dust has already gathered upon them. Besides the short stories Griffin has written three novels, *The Collegians*, *The Invasion*, and *The Duke of Monmouth*.

*The Collegians*, upon which alone his fame as a novelist now rests, represents all his gifts and graces. Aubrey de Vere, Charles Gavan Duffy, and Justin McCarthy have each expressed the opinion that it is the best Irish novel. In some aspects this is certainly true. No other novel has made so complete a synthesis of Irish society. No other novel has presented faithfully and effectively so many phases of Irish life. It presents life in the cabin; the well-ordered, prudent, busy, middle-class life (so seldom represented in Irish novels) of the prosperous middleman Daly and his happy family; and the life of the "big house" at Castle Chute. In fact most phases of Irish life, excepting the political and the highest social life, are introduced. And the typical happenings that make up the daily round are woven into the story — holiday merrymakings, marriages, births and

deaths, wakes and funerals, hunts and races, dining, dancing, drinking, and duelling. The book has a wide range of characters to correspond with the broad pictures of Irish life. There are humble characters like the gentle heroine Eily, and at the other remove Fighting Poll Naughten — “a terrible ’oman she was, comin’ again’ a man with her stockin’ off, an’ a stone in the foot of it;” or characters like the genial Lowry Looby, and, contrasting with him, the dangerous humpback Danny Mann. There is the same variety among the characters of a higher social scale, at the one extreme Father Edward, the kind, charitable parish priest, and at the other groups of tumultuous, uproarious country gentlemen like Fireball Craigh, the notorious duellist, former Pinkindie, and member of the Hell-Fire Club.

*The Collegians* is not merely the most comprehensive picture of Irish life. There is more art in the structure of the story than there is in any other of these novels. Its theme is not a new one. Hardress Cregan, a young gentleman just returned from college to his home on the Shannon, meets, while on a cruise down the river, a humble beauty,

Eily O'Connor, the flower of her neighborhood, as lovely and engaging as she is pure and good. He runs away with her, marries her secretly, and for reasons of his own keeps her concealed in a peasant's cabin, even her father being ignorant of the marriage or her whereabouts. Hardress is scarcely married when his love for his wife Eily vanishes like a dream before a new passion for a beauty in his own station. Eily's simple allurements, the humble manners that belonged with her birth and breeding, the brogue, honey-sweet as it was, became repulsive and intolerable to him. A hint to a faithful servant that he would gladly see the chain that binds him to Eily broken, even by violence, is, in a spirit of mistaken devotion, carried out. Eily is murdered by the servant. The guilt is brought home to Hardress. He is sentenced to transportation, and dies on the convict ship.

This story is enacted before an elaborate and detailed background, but neither the background, the high coloring of particular scenes, the variety of incidents, nor the crowd of characters is permitted to withdraw the attention from the leading persons, or to ob-

scure the main movement of the story. The talent that made the author's *Gisippus* a success upon the London stage is felt all through the narrative. The scene in which the company of hunters, of whom the hero is one, comes upon the body of the murdered Eily, is a startling dramatic climax, and is only one of a number of such striking moments. Minor climaxes all through make the narrative admirably lively, and keep the interest tense. It was this dramatic quality in the novel that led to its dramatization in the popular play of *The Colleen Bawn*, which, unhappily, magnified all the defects of its original, and allowed its distinctive virtues to escape.

This novel is enriched, too, by minor contributions in the author's best vein. There are bits of manners-painting done with delicacy or spirit as the case requires; there are love-scenes between arch maids and rustic gallants, done with the lightest touch and in the brightest, gayest moods; there are drinking-bouts and fights; there are tales of tricky goblins and of ghosts, half comic, half horrible; and folk-tales in which the wanton Celtic fancy is ever flying off into new

and delightfully unexpected vagaries and caprices.

*The Collegians* seems less commendable on the score of depth and truth of characterization, than in point of comprehensiveness of subject, art in construction, and excellence in the detail work of the composition. The minor characters live, but are not known intimately. Of the characters who play important rôles, all are lay-figures with the exception of the hero, Hardress Cregan, the humpback Danny, and Eily the heroine.

Hardress Cregan has not the elevation of character that belongs to the tragic hero. He has not the general nobility, the strong tides of feeling that make disaster tragically impressive. The true tragic note is not within the compass of the hero, and the novel on the whole is pathetic or melodramatic, not tragic. Hardress's passionate whim for Eily, blown away by the first adverse wind, is a slight thing. The love for Anne Chute that displaces his love for Eily is a fevered melodramatic emotion scarcely worth the name of passion, more smoke than flame for all the sound and fury with which it is voiced. And,

what is quite fatal to the pretensions of a tragic hero, Hardress earns and gets the hearty contempt of the reader, which changes to something more like loathing when he breaks the heart of his bride with the brutal confession that he hates her and all her endearments, and when he hints to his servant the murderous plot against her life. So far as Hardress is concerned, the reader will agree with the author's remark upon his hero, made in a letter to his brother — "he deserves hanging as richly as any young man from this to himself."

If the hero of *The Collegians* is melodramatic and stagey, the character of Eily is presented with a simple truth of portraiture untouched by such faults. The scenes in the lonely cabin where Eily went after sacrificing her peace and the peace of her father's old age to her love for Hardress, and where she was to remain in hiding until he should be ready to claim her as his wife before the world, are scenes of the deepest and most appealing pathos. Eily, in her weakness and dependence, despite the passive courage to endure, is not of the heroic fibre that awakens admiration. But when, after Hardress's cruel confession that his love for her is



dead and that he hates the ties that bind him, she stands like a helpless thing at bay, her sad case draws deep upon the pity and sympathy of the reader. That scene is a stroke of genius memorable as a poignantly felt and faithfully rendered situation.

Danny Mann, the humpback, led, by the faithful retainer's unquestioning devotion, to an atrocious crime, is also a real creation. The creative touch is felt in scenes like that where Danny, denounced as a villain by his master for the perpetration of the crime to which he was incited by him, throws off his doglike devotion, turns like a wolf upon his ungrateful master, and at the price of his own life gives him over to the mercy of the law.

*The Collegians* is undoubtedly the best Irish novel in its comprehensiveness and its structure, and in the minor embellishments carefully subordinated to the main theme; but the hero Hardress has the noise, the rant, and all the limitations of the melodramatic type of character. In point of characterization, this novel, representing Griffin at his best, cannot compare with the nobility, elevation, and full-pulsed humanity of Carleton's creations.

*The Invasion* and *The Duke of Monmouth* are historical novels. *The Invasion* is a story of Irish life and manners in the eighth century, before the repeated incursions of the Danes had wasted the valleys and pillaged the towns, churches, and abbeys. At the first glance the novel has something of a forbidding aspect from the innumerable ancient Irish words, uncouth and unintelligible to the uninitiated, which the author has sprinkled with a liberal hand over the pages. Despite the Irish terms, however, the story lacks authority from the antiquarian standpoint. Unhappily narrative interest, the creative touch in characterization, and imaginative reanimation of the past, which could easily override minor objections to the novel, are wanting. *The Invasion* was coldly received on its first appearance, and the public feeling toward it will not grow warmer. *The Duke of Monmouth*, a story of the invasion of England by the ill-starred Duke of Monmouth, has no place among novels of Irish life, and no standing among historical novels. Both *The Invasion* and *The Duke of Monmouth* have been shelved forever.

Carleton's work is of very uneven excellence.

His genius makes its presence most continuously felt in the *Traits and Stories*, *Fardarougha*, *The Black Prophet*, and *The Emigrants of Ahadarra*. From these tales and novels his gifts may be known in their range and fulness. Though in most of the rest of Carleton's work the inspiration is intermittent, with large spaces of commonplace between the good things, his genius often wakens to moments of tragedy, of pathos, or of humor, or to dramatic situations that keep a great part of the tales and novels well above the dead level of mediocrity. Besides the novels and tales named above as representative of his genius at its best, others are notable in one way or another. *Valentine M'Clutchy* is the most daring picture of Irish country life ever executed. In it he paints black, but paints with power, a bad middleman, a bad magistrate, Orange lodges, dissenting proselytizers, and proselytizers of the Established Church. In the *Tithe Proctor* he at once gives a vivid picture of, and assails fiercely, popular movements against, the landlords. When the Young Irelanders were warring upon the sins of Old Ireland, Carleton lent a hand by writing a series of stories for *The National*

*Library*, including *Rody the Rover*, a book of absorbing interest in laying bare the working of the secret societies ; *Paddy-go-Easy*, a home thrust at the laziness, slovenliness, shiftlessness, and squalor of the peasants ; and *Art Maguire, or The Broken Pledge*, a story that is perhaps the most powerful temperance tract ever written.

Carleton knew and understood no class of society but that in which he was born. When, as in *Jane Sinclair*, he attempts to present middle-class life, or when, as in *The Squanders of Castle Squander*, he attempts to present the life of the gentry, he fails. But as a novelist of the manners of the peasantry, Carleton's place is in the front rank. The business of the manners novel is to introduce the reader to people whose social conditions and customs are strange, and to leave him as much at home under new conditions and with new friends as though in his own element. Those who have read Carleton's books will not be likely to gainsay the assertion that, considered merely as a novelist of the manners of the peasantry, he has achieved a measure of success greater than that of any Scotch or English novelist in the same field. Carleton

had by nature and circumstances the endowment of a great realist—he was keenly observant, had a wonderful memory, a graphic touch, and a knowledge both wide and detailed of his subject. These gifts served him well as a novelist of manners. Thomas Davis, in a brief comment upon a collection of Carleton's tales, states concisely the value of his fiction as a living record of ways of life and social types that were soon to disappear from the face of the earth. He says in part:—

“The Fairies and the Banshees, the Poor Scholar, and The Ribbonman, The Orange Lodge, The Illicit Still, and the Faction Fight are vanishing into history, and unless this generation paints them no other will know what they were. . . .

“You are never wearied by an inventory of wardrobes, as in short English descriptive fictions; yet you see how every one is dressed; you hear the honey brogue of the maiden, and the downy voice of the child; the managed accents of flattery or traffic, the shrill tones of woman's fretting, and the troubled gush of man's anger. The moory upland and the cornslopes, the glen where the rocks jut through mantling heather, and bright brooks gurggle amid the scented banks of wild herbs; the shivering cabin, and the rudely-

lighted farm-house are as plain in Carleton's pages as if he used canvas and colours with a skill varying from Wilson and Poussin to Teniers and Wilkie. . . .

"He is a genuine Senachie, and brings you to dance and to wake, to wedding and christening—makes you romp with the girls, and race with the boys—tremble at the ghosts, and frolic with the fairies of the whole parish.

"Come what change there may over Ireland, in these '*Tales and Sketches*' the peasantry of the past hundred years can be forever lived with." <sup>1</sup>

Among other gifts Carleton had in a very high degree one prime constituent of genius—sensibility, sound and strong, quick and many-sided. The deepest emotions of this people move in him, and are poured through his work. In story after story he strikes the chords of the simple, primary, elemental passions and affections, and makes them answer in notes of resonant power, and in the tones and accent of his race. People who are tired of thin, second-hand feeling, and sentimental hair-splitting, will rejoice in the emotional depth and fulness of Carleton's works, where passions are as strong as the tides.

<sup>1</sup> *Literary and Historical Essays*, pp. 209-210.



Carleton is, without question, the creative genius among the Irish novelists. No other of them can show such a company of men and women so varied in character, so broadly typical, so lifelike. And his creations have a very real interest on different sides, whether considered as moral types, as social types, or as embodiments of the Celtic Irish spirit. Few novelists, among many greater than he, have anything to put beside his gallery of women, so clear-cut in their moral and national traits. He is the greatest portrayer of Irish womanhood in its sanctity and moral beauty, and peculiarly happy in his pictures of Irish maidenhood. The soft charm of the peasant girls whom he knew and loved in his youth, and whom he paints in the spirit of a lover and with a master hand, steals over the author's heart as he tells of them, and brings the reader under their spell. His peasant girls stand apart by themselves, lovely as moral types and unmistakably national. Ardent and intense in their feelings, they are pure without a suggestion of coldness. Their purity owes nothing to prudence, convention, nor even to duty; they turn to virtue instinctively as flowers to the sun. Their sen-

timent is always delicate, with never a touch of grossness. And in sharp relief against their gentleness and tenderness a courageous spirituality stands out, displaying itself, among many other ways, in a fine disdain for material considerations in the placing of their affections. With these traits there go, to complete these unique creations, a sunny playfulness, an arch pleasantry, and a tripping humor, all toned and mellowed by a shade of melancholy. The old women are as notable in their way as the young. Full-heartedness in joy or grief belongs to them, deepening their sorrows, enriching their happiness, lending unction to kind deeds, and warmth to their cheery, hospitable welcomes. Their affections, finding utterance in speech crowded with terms of endearment, flow full and free, and prompt to every call. Irish literature in English has so far left no nobler legacy than the women of Carleton's creation.

The young men, too, are clear-cut, both as national and moral types, distinguished particularly by their delicacy of sentiment and the pure and generous tone of their feelings. In their love the moral and the emotional

are never separated, and passion awakens only where physical charm and moral beauty combine. The old men are fit companions for the old women, carrying into old age the rich humor, the warm hearts, the generous impulses, and April moods of youth.

As one recalls and compares Carleton's creations, the variety and the diversity of the types are astonishing. What a range of character from the noble women, Mave Sullivan and Honor O'Donovan, to the stirring, capable Ellish Connell, and from her to the wife of the Black Prophet; or from the rustic Romeo, Connor O'Donovan, to the genial toper and speculator Ned M'Keown, and from him again to the villain Bartle Flanagan, or the miser Darby Skinadre.

As a humorist, Carleton is splendidly and richly gifted. He is the best exponent of the Celtic Irish genius for humor of every variety. He is equally master of that which blends with tears, of the gentle and playful, the subtle and tricky, the exuberant, the wild, and the fierce. Humor as found in Carleton is free from conscious smartness, clumsiness, or malice. It is good-natured, and will claim no

relationship with the breed of wit that rejoices in the mortification of a victim; it springs generally from a desire to share with another the delightful perception of some ridiculous incongruity. It is not hollow, nor flippant, nor bitter, but rich, subtle, searching, with a tonic quality to it that clears and sweetens the spirits. It can become tender and wistful, hovering on the border-land between tears and laughter, and leaving a sun-shower mood—laughter touched with tears, and tears mixed with laughter.

A love of nature makes itself felt all through Carleton. The feeling is direct, simple, and strong. It shows itself in no rapt contemplation or minute observation, and carries with it no particular mysticism and no fine-spun nature-theories. Carleton looks upon the face of nature with a fulness of delight. The key of his feeling is precisely struck in a comment of his own in the first chapter of his autobiography, where he says, "I enjoyed great happiness from the character of the landscape." It is a completely humanized landscape that appeals to him. He loves the cultivated fields, meadows where homesteads nestle, familiar

woods, mountains all have climbed, brooks to whose murmurs all have listened. He loves nature for its shady haunts, its grateful hues, sweet breezes, and cool springs and streams.

Carleton's genius was a purely native growth that knew no graft of culture. It drew its strength from roots struck deep in the native soil, and grew to greatness under home skies. Besides its limitations as a purely native product, it had the limitations, never outgrown nor overcome, of the class from which its possessor sprang. He was blood and bone of the peasants of whom he wrote, and like them untrained mentally, morally, and emotionally. All that characterized the peasant was reflected in his work — the imperfect education, the easily roused passions, the intense affections, the prejudices, the strength, the weakness, and the besetting sins. Though endowed with the finest, deepest feeling, he seems incapable of thought and reason, and is only himself under the inspiration of strong impulse. When he pauses for a reflection or a generalization he is sure to shoot wide of the mark, and to do so with a complacent, naïve unconsciousness of having

missed that leaves the reader gasping in amused astonishment.

It is unfortunate that Carleton lacked the artistic training that might have enabled him to make the best of his splendid gifts as a story-teller. As it is, character, sentiment, humor, pathos, and vivid manners-painting are what tell in his work, not construction or style. There is little economy in his plots; little discrimination in the choice of incident; and there is constant repetition that scores no artistic point. Perspective, both in the arrangement of incidents in the plot, and in the emotional movement, is wanting. Things do not relate themselves properly to a central theme. Carleton misses all the effectiveness that comes from attention to these and such like matters. With the resources of the technique of the art in his service he might have left records of his genius, in more compact, telling, and beautiful forms, that would have kept his books still current the world over.

Carleton is accurate as a phonograph in the use of dialect; and he is the great master of the idioms of the people, of the picturesque form and color of their speech, and of all the



turns and twists they gave the English language in the attempt to make that obstinate medium express their thoughts and feelings after their own fashion. Their language was his native tongue; he took naturally to their lively way of expressing themselves by rhetorical questions and sentences that keep the meaning in suspense. He had an astonishing command of the neat turns of phrase, the quick, apt similes, and the quaint forms of speech to be caught flying in every village. The peasant idioms, moulded as they are from the English speech by the race spirit, are more than quaint and amusing; they assist in characterization, and Carleton knew how, in using them, to add many a subtle touch to his creations. Carleton made the effort in his writing to purge his vocabulary of terms peculiarly local and northern, and those who know assert that he has succeeded, and in vocabulary and idiom uses a language that passes current the country over, and makes a perfect record of the accent of old Ireland.

Carleton's style in its lack of precision and correctness is a fair mark for criticism; but it is a living, flexible style, and gives easy, flowing

expression to the narrative. On the whole it is unobtrusive, and attracts little attention to itself. At times, however, especially where dialect is used, it takes on very positive merits. In humorous passages it is deliciously crisp; in the great moments of the stories it becomes solemn in its simple force; and under the rush of strong emotion, in expressions of affection, or in threats, maledictions, and prayers, it shows the Celtic coloring in the use of beautiful figures and impassioned turns of speech.

As a novelist, Carleton was splendidly endowed. He had the gifts of a great realist; he had the creative faculty; a sensibility strong and many-sided; and a spring that never failed of the rarest, choicest humor. Despite limitations on the side of imperfect education and artistic training, he surpasses all his fellows in stature, the one towering figure among them, impressive in his rough-hewn grandeur.

Looking back over these novels the thought will occur that one phase of Irish life has been slighted, the life of the well-behaved, orderly middle class. One will be struck also by a very notable characteristic—the moral purity

that belongs to each and every one of the novelists of both the peasantry and the gentry. And the reading of these novels cannot fail to leave a sense of regret at the imperfect education and imperfect art that stood, it would seem, between the most gifted of the Irish novelists and the achievement within their reach. Even the greatest of them wrote in a language whose literature he had not sufficiently assimilated to know the true value of words. But this defective style and imperfect artistic sense and training will appear but natural when it is remembered that Irish literature in English was, so far as imaginative work is concerned, entirely a thing of the nineteenth century. In fact, until the events of 1782 gave Dublin importance, there was no centre for a literature to gather round. Among English Protestants in Ireland, great men of letters did indeed arise who showed in their work something of the Irish temperament; but they handled English themes, and strictly according to English literary tradition.

These novels leave memories of a quaint and curious society, and of distinctive social types; they do justice to the fine qualities of the

frank and fearless old gentry — their high spirit, wit, geniality, and generosity ; and they present a peasantry clever, courteous, kindly, and dowered with a wealth of fine feelings.

Since the work of the novelists here treated was finished, a new school has arisen, different from Miss Edgeworth in being strongly colored with Celtic romance ; different from Lever in aiming at a faithful, vital, and sincere portraiture of the Irish people ; different from Carleton in having a high standard of style and of art in general ; and different from all the novelists included within the present survey by the possession of a wider knowledge and a finer culture. And now in Ireland new forces are astir in the realm of imaginative literature both in prose and verse.



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